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MLLE DE LESPINASSE

LOVE LETTERS

TO AND FROM

THE COMTE DE GUIBERT

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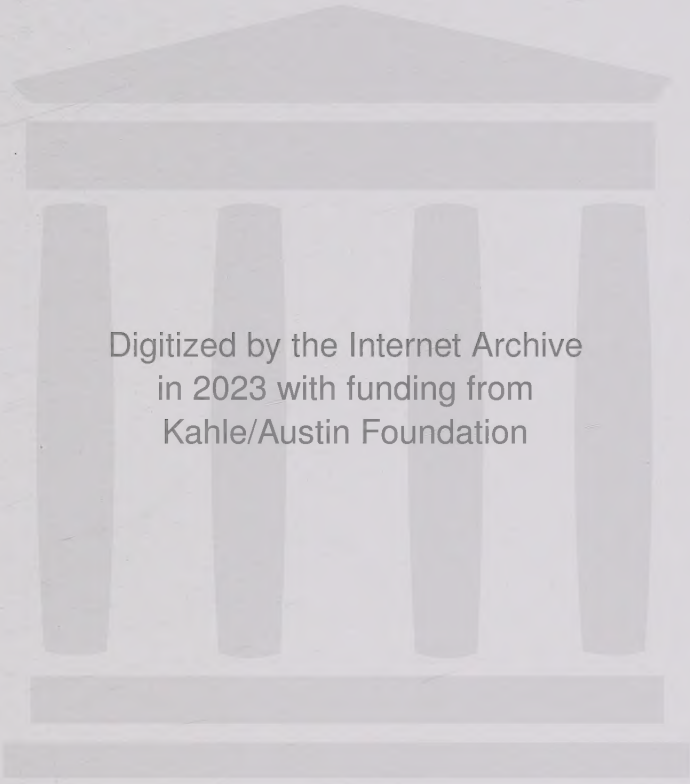
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MADEMOISELLE DE LESPINASSE

[*frontispiece*

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OF XVIII CENTURY FRENCH LITERATURE

LOVE LETTERS OF MLLE DE LESPINASSE

TO AND FROM

THE COMTE DE GUIBERT

Translated with an Introduction and Biographical Index by

E. H. F. Mills

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LIST OF PORTRAITS

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INTRODUCTION

The letters of Mlle de Lespinasse to the comte de Guibert were first published in 1809. They were found among her papers after her death in 1776, and carefully preserved until, long after Guibert's death, they were printed by his widow. There were several reprints of the first edition during the nineteenth century, the best being that edited, with notes, by E. Asse, in 1882. A number of hitherto unpublished letters to various correspondents were printed by M. Charles Henry in 1887, but no addition of any importance was made to the correspondence with Guibert until 1906. In that year the comte de Villeneuve-Guibert, who had access to all the family archives, decided that a definitive edition should be published. The manuscripts in his possession showed that there were considerable omissions in all the printed editions, and he was thus able to claim that he was producing something far more than a reprint. It is from this 1906 edition, which besides many variant readings, contains twenty-one previously unpublished letters of Mlle de Lespinasse, and a number of letters from Guibert, that the present translation has been made, with the courteous consent of MM. Calmann-Levy.

When the comtesse de Guibert decided to give the letters to the world, her first thought was that they would add to the reputation of her husband. To her it would seem that the proof that he could inspire such an affection was one more evidence of his genius. That Guibert had genius was an article of faith with his wife and with most of his contemporaries. The

letters would show that one of the most notable women of the time had devoted her life to him, and would shed a further lustre upon a memory that was already growing dim.

But, all unwittingly, madame Guibert gave posterity a masterpiece; and if her husband is remembered to-day, it is only because he was loved by Mlle de Lespinasse. In these letters the secrets of a woman's heart, in all their pathetic truth, are revealed. The man is seen, not in the least understanding the workings of the feminine mind, full of his own ambitions, a little disturbed at the depth of feeling which he has aroused, rather wishing that he was safely out of it all. To the woman, nothing counted except her love. She was *true* in everything, she once said of herself, and these letters bear the stamp of utter truth. As the story of a tragic affection, of a heart torn between conflicting emotions—passion, remorse, jealousy—while the frail body slowly sinks beneath a burden greater than it can endure, they must hold the attention of every reader. The emotion may at times seem exaggerated, even morbid, but its essential reality cannot be doubted. Here is a woman who loves, whose whole inner life is filled by her love; she feels, and she can express, the passions which, from all time women, and men too, have felt.

But, if taken by themselves and for themselves, the letters are deeply interesting, they acquire an added importance from the social position and surroundings of the author. They are not the solitary outpourings of one who, like the Portuguese Nun a century before, bemoans from within a convent's walls the loss of a faithless lover. They reveal the heart of a leader of Parisian society, at a time when Reason, not Emotion, seemed to be the chief object of civilised ambition. They are the work of a woman who attracted many of

the best thinkers of the age, whose house was the chosen haunt of Turgot and d'Alembert, of Marmontel and La Harpe, of Chastellux and Suard. In the age when Crébillon wrote the wittiest of licentious tales, when the duc de Richelieu vaunted his amorous conquests, when real emotion was proscribed as unbefitting a gentleman, Mlle de Lespinasse stands out as a proof that other, and very different, influences were at work. Emotion might not be fashionable, but it could not be abolished; and as de Goncourt says, the age was " ill at ease, and looking for better things."[1]

Julie-Jeanne-Eléonore de Lespinasse was born at Lyons on 9 November, 1732. She was the natural daughter of Julie Claude Hilaire d'Albon, who had for many years lived apart from her husband, and did not, in fact, see him again before her death. After the birth and baptism of the child, her mother took her to the château of Avauges, where the years of early youth were spent. Madame d'Albon showed much affection for her youngest daughter, and for some years the child's life was happy and peaceful.[2] Her half-brother, Camille, eight years older than herself, was still not too old to be a play-mate ; with Diane, who was sixteen years her senior, she could have but little in common. But in 1739 Diane married Gaspard, comte de Vichy, and from this time the even course of Julie's life was changed. Her mother, who knew that her own health was failing, began to realise more clearly than ever how dark was the future which lay before her youngest child. She had hoped that by some legal process Julie might be proved legitimate, and thus assured of a portion of the paternal estates. But her project was vehemently opposed by all her family,

[1] La Femme au 18e Siècle, p. 205 (1912).

[2] La Harpe's account of Julie's early years is the longest, but the most inaccurate. (Correspondance Littéraire, I, p. 383 f.)

and she was unable to carry her point. The child's father did nothing and, if the researches of the comte de Ségur may be relied on, for a very good reason. The father was no other than Gaspard, comte de Vichy,[1] now madame d'Albon's son-in-law. The situation was indeed more complicated than anything to be found in the romances of Prévost or Richardson, as Mlle de Lespinasse said herself.

The last years of madame d'Albon's life were a time of constant nervous strain ; the child over whom her mother would certainly weep and lament, suffered deeply ; " I knew terror and horror before I could think or judge."[2] It was in vain that madame d'Albon urged her daughter to enter a convent ; and, when, in 1748, she died, she left her nothing but a small annuity and the key of a desk which contained a large sum in cash. Quixotic, proud and generous, Mlle de Lespinasse instantly handed over the key to her relations, and was taken by them to the château of Champrond, where she occupied a position almost menial in its dependence. The de Vichys were " extraordinary people," as Gaspard's wife herself admitted,[3] and they were determined never to give Julie a chance to assert any claim to a share in their estates. Governess of Diane's three children, she seems to have led a life of the utmost misery. Of the boy, Abel, she became very fond, and kept up a friendship with him all her life ; but the memory of the years at Champrond was always with her and her naturally sensitive mind never lost the imprint of the sufferings of those early days.

[1] De Ségur : Julie de Lespinasse, ch. 1 (Paris, 1925). Bachaumont's conjecture that the Cardinal de Tencin was the father is without foundation. (Mémoires secrets, 9, 31 May, 1776.)

[2] Letter to Condorcet, 19 October, 1773.

[3] De Ségur, op. cit., p. 17.

Before long life at Champrond became impossible, and Mlle de Lespinasse formed the plan of going to a convent at Lyons, not as a nun, but as a guest. She hoped that with the annuity left her by her mother, and some help from her half-brother Camille d'Albon, she might be able to live in comparative comfort and freedom.

But a visitor who was to change the whole course of Julie's life came to Champrond. She was Gaspard's sister, madame du Deffand, now almost blind, and longing for means to bring brightness and happiness into her dull and disenchanted existence. She saw Julie, and was immediately attracted to her. She learned of her misfortunes, and her determination to go into a convent. She hinted that perhaps she might take her to live with her in Paris. The suggestion was welcomed with joy, but it was not so easy to carry out. Gaspard and his wife were strongly opposed to it. They dreaded any attempt to establish claims which might damage their interests. It was only after prolonged negotiations and the most definite pledges that Julie would make no effort to establish her legitimacy, that, in 1754, the final arrangements were made and Mlle de Lespinasse went to live with madame du Deffand at the Convent of St Joseph, in the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

She was fortunate in her new friend, for nowhere could she have found a better opportunity than in the *salon* of madame du Deffand to develop those gifts which made her in later years so powerful a force in the literary life of Paris. The *salon* had by this time become one of the most important factors in society. There literary reputations were made and lost; there elections to the Academy were discussed and arranged.

Not without its forerunners in the preceding century, for at the Hôtel de Rambouillet literary

discussions, which degenerated too easily into the preciosity which Molière derided, had been constant, the *salon* was none the less essentially an invention of the eighteenth century. New ideas were abroad; a new spirit of discussion, a wider outlook, a tolerance which in time bordered on fanaticism. The work of the "libertins" of the century before was carried on, but more openly and with far more serious purpose. Cafés, such as the *Procope*, and more definitely constituted clubs, such as the *Entresol*, provided opportunities for meeting and discussing problems of every kind. The opinion of the habitués of the *Procope*, indeed, long retained its importance; and Marmontel, whose pride, inflamed by success, scorned the more lowly haunts of his youth, found it a bitter enemy.[1]

But the Cafés alone could not have provided at once a free arena for discussion and an opportunity for the social education of the disputants. It was in the drawing-room, ruled by a cultured woman of the world, that budding authors cast off the awkwardness of youth and acquired the politeness, the tact and the easy manners which distinguished Parisian society. And it was the good fortune of Paris that throughout the century a succession of such women appeared: madame de Lambert, madame de Tencin, madame Geoffrin, madame du Deffand, madame Necker, mademoiselle de Lespinasse herself, among the most illustrious.

Under the first two the *salon* was not yet, what it later became, the preserve of the philosophers; but its social importance was established, and their successors had only to follow on the same lines and, like madame Geoffrin, appropriate what they could.[2] It

[1] Marmontel, Mémoires, bk, 4, p. 116. (Oeuvres, t. 1, 1819.)
[2] Marmontel, op. cit., p. 174.

would be hard to imagine a greater contrast than that which distinguished these two. Madame de Lambert, a model of discretion, of prudence, and decorum,[1] madame de Tencin precisely the opposite. The former writes *Counsels of a Mother to her Son and Daughter;* the latter is author of the *Comte de Comminges* and the *Siege of Calais*, works which show an understanding of human frailty which was certainly not second-hand.

From 1710 to 1733 madame de Lambert ruled supreme. On Tuesdays she received men of letters, on Wednesdays the gathering was of a more purely social character. "It was the rendezvous of celebrated men," says Hénault.[2] "One had to pass her scrutiny if one was to be elected to the Academy; at her house works that were ready to be published were read . . ." But in the evening matters of high import were forgotten, and the company was the gayest in Paris. There you would meet Fontenelle, Sacy, Mairan, Dacier, and discuss the never-settled quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. Voltaire, madame de Lambert could not attract, and she did not attempt it. There was preserved in her *salon* a certain atmosphere of the seventeenth century, and neither the hypocritical devotion of the last years of Louis XIV, nor the opposite excesses of the Regency found any reflection there.[3] The impression is rather one of the survival of Victorianism into the twentieth century: Mme de Lambert must often have said "We are not amused."

Mme de Tencin was very different. Her early days were stormy; there were rumours, and worse, about her private character. She certainly for a moment attracted the Regent; she attracted others

[1] Du Bled, La Société française, 5e série, p. 173.
[2] Hénault, Mémoires, p. 104. [3] Du Bled, op. cit., p. 177.

too, and became the mother of the man who afterwards attained celebrity as Jean Le Rond d'Alembert. The chevalier Deſtouches, who was his father, was not unnaturally indignant when he heard that the child had been left to the tender mercies of charity upon the ſteps of the church of Saint Jean Le Rond. He discovered his whereabouts, and had him decently brought up. A laſt tragedy in 1726 brought Madame de Tencin's career of gallantry to an end. Her lover, Charles de la Fresnais, shot himself in her rooms, leaving behind him the moſt bitter accusations againſt her, and it was only through the intervention of powerful friends that she escaped imprisonment or worse. But with all this, madame de Tencin was a woman of great ability, and more than ordinary common sense. It was by her aid that her brother, a man of mediocre gifts, became a cardinal, and could even aspire to succeed Fleury as the king's chief miniſter. To Marmontel, she seemed at firſt merely "*la bonne femme*." But he soon changed his opinion, "What finesse, suppleness, activity of mind, were concealed behind that naïve air, that appearance of calm and leisure. The advantage I reaped from converse with her was a saner and deeper knowledge of the world."[1] How appropriate her advice to young authors: "Woe to the man who expects everything from his pen: nothing is more uncertain." And not less valuable to a young man who wanted to make his way was her warning that he should rely upon women rather than upon men. "Through women you can do anything you like with men."[2] But if you want a woman to be useful to you, be careful not to fall in love with her. And to madame Geoffrin who came to madame de Tencin for lessons in her art, she said: "Never rebuff

[1] Marmontel, op. cit., p. 126. [2] Marmontel, ib.

anyone ; for even though nine people out of ten will never care a scrap about you, the tenth may be a useful friend."

In her *salon* Fontenelle, La Motte, Montesquieu, Marivaux, Duclos, Lord Chesterfield, gathered. The young Marmontel was taken there by the financier La Poplinière, and read his tragedy *Aristomène*. It was hard work to make Fontenelle, who was very deaf, hear a word, but the assembled company was gracious and Marmontel went away pleased, with an invitation to come back when he liked. But the company was too witty for him, and he preferred the quiet seclusion of his hostess's country-house at Passy. Everyone went prepared, and waited for a chance to have his say, and Marivaux, in particular, was impatient to show off his cleverness. " Mairan spied his opportunity ; Astruc did not deign to wait for it. Fontenelle alone let it come without looking for it, and never took more than a moment over his anecdote. Helvétius, attentive and discreet, reaped that he might one day sow."[1]

Side by side with the *salon* of madame de Tencin was that ruled over by the marquis du Deffand, not yet haunted by the dread spectre of blindness.[2] Marie de Vichy-Champrond was born in 1697. In 1718 she married the marquis du Deffand, and was at once plunged into the riotous life of the court of the Regent d'Orleans. She was pretty, intelligent, and related to many of the foremost courtiers of the time. It was a period when happy marriages, in the modern sense of the word, were hardly known. Among the *bourgeoisie* the steady, careful life which has made the French housekeeper famous for her economy, was the rule,

[1] Marmontel, op. cit., p. 108.

[2] Cf. Introduction to the *Correspondance complète de la Marquise du Deffand*, ed. Lescure. 2 v. Paris, 1865.

and the *Journals* of Marais and Buvat show with what amazement mingled with disgust they viewed the extravagance of the ruling classes. To the daughter of a tradesman, marriage was a serious affair. But in Society it was the very reverse. The last thing that a husband or wife would expect was constancy. And so, although her career was not marked by such outrageous scandal as gathered round madame de Tencin, madame du Deffand also had her fling. She, too, attracted the Regent, and kept him for a fortnight; but neither could find in the other the remedy for the boredom which filled their minds. For, at bottom, madame du Deffand was always bored; she was incapable of any deep affection; and this was at once the reason of the brilliant success of her *salon*, and of the tragedy which pierces through the wit of her correspondence with Horace Walpole. But that was still far in the future, and life meantime was pleasant enough. In 1721 the Regent gave a magnificent fête at Saint-Cloud; here madame du Deffand met one Delrieu du Fargis and as a result her husband definitely refused to see her again. The same day, too, she made the acquaintance of Voltaire, who remained a firm friend for the rest of her life. The pace was too great, however, and after a last effort at reconciliation with her husband, an effort in which the Circassian Mlle d'Aïssé, that strange exotic flower which for a space shed its fragrance over a society amazed to find in its midst a woman who really felt, had played a large part, madame du Deffand retired into comparative obscurity at the court of Sceaux. There the duchesse du Maine kept up a lavish hospitality, and if the heyday of its magnificence was now past, life was still a round of amusement and witty conversation. From this time, about 1730, until the death of the duchesse in 1753, madame du Deffand divided her time between

Sceaux and her little house in the Rue de Beaune in Paris. Tired of more exciting liaisons, she found at Sceaux the man to whom for many years she gave what affection she had to give. The President Hénault, who was born in 1685, had himself spent a stormy youth, but had now devoted himself to ambitions purely literary. His reading was wide, his intelligence great, his social charm considerable. His alliance with madame du Deffand was no small factor in the establishment of a social centre of which Hénault says himself: "Never had any woman more friends, or deserved them better. . . . Soon the best and most brilliant company gathered there; and all were subjugated by her."[1] By the time that Mlle de Lespinasse came to live with her, madame du Deffand had moved from the Rue de Beaune to the Convent of Saint-Joseph. Her husband had died in 1750; and the convent offered to widows of high birth a retreat which placed no restraint upon their freedom. Hénault was still her friend. He had discovered that she was neither "temperamental nor romantic," but his own affection was given to another, and he was easily reconciled to a relationship from which all emotion was carefully excluded. A new face had appeared in the *salon*; d'Alembert's liveliness had captivated madame de Deffand and she used all her influence to secure his election to the Academy in 1754. D'Alembert, on his part, fully appreciated her friendship, and in writing to the marquis d'Argens who had transmitted to him the King of Prussia's invitation to go to Berlin, he said that the most powerful of all the reasons for his refusal was his attachment to his friends. The growing reputation of one who was the best mathematician of his day, and whose

[1] Hénault: Mémoires, p. 112.

Preface to the projected Encyclopædia (1751) had been a literary event of the first importance, shed a new lustre over the *salon* and provided madame du Deffand with a fresh sensation. But her sight began to fail and the friendship of Voltaire, Formont, Pont-de-Veyle and the chevalier d'Aydie could do little to console her. Retreat into the country seemed a last resource, and so she went to her relations at Champrond. She brought back the companion who was to be her close attendant for fourteen years, and who was to deal her the severest blow of her life.

For the time, however, all went well. The letters of Mlle de Lespinasse, when her benefactress was absent, were full of affection and gratitude; she was a good reader, a useful companion, discreet, not too pretty, and apparently all that could be wished. Madame du Deffand was far from unselfish. She liked Julie, but only because she found her useful. At the very beginning she warned her that she must be careful to avoid any suspicion of artifice in her behaviour. "I am distrustful by nature . . . so you must be careful never to lose one of the chief charms of youth: candour."[1] So long as the new-comer kept to her proper place, and made no attempt to presume on a position which she owed to kindness alone madame du Deffand was content. It may seem remarkable that she did not hesitate longer before introducing this stranger into her *salon*. She must have felt a confidence in her own powers which events proved ill-founded. She could not, in any case, have realised how quickly this country girl would assimilate all that the society of the convent of Saint-Joseph could teach her. She could not have known how receptive was the mind which was now given the chance to develop its every faculty. "Look at the education I received: madame du Deffand—I must cite her for

[1] *Correspondance*, t. 1, p. 194 (13 Feb., 1754).

her intelligence—the President Hénault, the abbé Bon, the archbishops of Toulouse and Aix, M. Turgot, M. d'Alembert, the abbé de Boismont, M. de Mora ; such are the people who taught me to speak and to think and who deigned to think something of me."[1] And the lessons were not wasted. The time came when Julie felt that she was capable of greater things.

For it was not altogether an easy life for a girl. Marmontel gives a vivid impression of the difficulties which she had to encounter. "It was a small thing to be compelled to wait assiduously upon a blind and nervy woman ; it was necessary to turn day into night, and night into day, to watch by her bed-side, and lull her to sleep by reading to her."[2] Marmontel indeed attributes the ill-health of Julie's later years to these hours of toil. Madame du Deffand had never been easy to get on with. Her own family detested her, she was a *Megaera*[3] to them ; and if that is rather too strong a word, she certainly was difficult. As André Maurois has said, La Bruyère's phrase applied to her exactly : "How difficult it is to be pleased with anyone ! "[4] It is easy to while away hours of boredom by thinking out witty and malicious things to say about one's friends, but that is not the way to keep them. D'Alembert, who had been a most devoted subject, cannot be blamed for the interest which the new-comer aroused in him. Julie and he became firm friends ; before long, on d'Alembert's side, the feeling was deeper. The President Hénault himself, despite his seventy years, was attracted. It was said, but with no authority, that he even wished to marry her. D'Alembert became less constant in his attendance on madame du Deffand. He wrote to excuse himself, but without the old fervour. Julie, meantime,

[1] *Infra* Letter 65.
[2] Marmontel, op. cit., p. 244.
[3] de Ségur, op. cit., p. 52.
[4] Maurois, Etudes anglaises, p. 178.

acquiring more and more self-confidence, realising that her lot was not in fact very enviable, that she was entirely dependent upon the caprices of an old woman to whom, as she might not unfairly think, she did not really owe very much, began to establish a position of her own. Madame du Deffand rarely rose before six in the evening; Mlle de Lespinasse rose usually at five; and here was an hour free. Her friends easily persuaded her to let them hold a minor *salon* in her room, and d'Alembert, Chastellux, Turgot, Marmontel, would gather there and enjoy a freer atmosphere.

This state of affairs could not last. The treachery was discovered, and madame du Deffand's wrath was implacable. There was no alternative: Julie must go. And with her went her friends.[1] Madame du Deffand never forgave Hénault for taking Julie's side. D'Alembert, by now quite definitely in love, did not hesitate a moment. Even the duchesse de Luxembourg deserted her old friend, and made a present of a suite of furniture for the new rooms which Mlle de Lespinasse took in the Rue Saint-Dominique, quite close to the convent of Saint-Joseph. Marmontel declares that Choiseul, who was then in power, obtained a pension for her from the king. This seems improbable; but it is certain that madame Geoffrin gave her annually a thousand crowns,[2] and remained a constant friend until the end.

No woman, except Mlle de Lespinasse, had a standing invitation to madame Geoffrin's receptions, where on Mondays the company was predominantly artistic, on Wednesdays, literary. At her house everyone of note was to be met. Painters, such as Bouchardon and Van Loo would discuss the principles of their art, while d'Alembert, Morellet, Chastellux, Saint-Lambert, Thomas, would lay aside their more

[1] 1764. [2] Grimm, op. cit., II, p. 265.

serious preoccupations and join in the most sparkling conversation. D'Alembert was at his best then; he escaped from his lodgings like a school-boy, and gave free rein to a lively wit,[1] though he signally failed to impress madame de Genlis, who was something worse than a prig.[2] Certainly, if Marmontel's account is to be trusted, the evenings spent under the watchful eye of madame Geoffrin were delightful. But the hostess was not tolerant of everything. She was a *bourgoise*, and had all the careful instincts of her class. Did anyone go a little too far, her quiet *Violà qui eſt bien* reduced the offender to silence. "Hers was a curious character, all half-shades and nuances; decided none the less, but with no distinctive mark," says Marmontel. She loved to be with people of high rank and position, and thoroughly enjoyed her visit to the king of Poland in 1766, when Stanislas welcomed her as his "*Maman*." "She was a striking example of the consideration which the society of men of letters can give," says La Harpe,[3] and adds, somewhat ruefully, that men of letters themselves rarely attain such consideration, because they are never rich enough. At any rate, madame Geoffrin succeeded fully in her ambitions, and she retained to the end the real affection of her guests. She enjoyed helping her friends, even if she would never risk compromising her position. Foreigners of distinction gathered round her, among them Galiani, Caraccioli (the "ambassador" of Julie's letters), the comte de Creutz, Mlle de Lespinasse had nothing to lose when she exchanged the perilous friendship of madame du Deffand for the genuine affection of madame Geoffrin.

She was fortunate, too, in the age in which she

[1] Marmontel, op. cit., p. 177.

[2] De Genlis, Mémoires, 3, p. 83.

[3] La Harpe, Correspondance Littéraire, I, p. 276.

lived. A new spirit was abroad, and longings which could not be satisfied by the reticence of madame Geoffrin nor by the purely destructive spirit of the circle which gathered round d'Holbach and Helvétius. It was not enough to build up philosophical systems, of which the basis was pure egoism, not enough *écraser l'infâme*, and to show the folly of ecclesiastical optimism. Nor was there any real satisfaction to be found in the care-free, indolent, attitude of those who laughed and joked with the younger Crébillon. The type of morality which is to be found in the *Sopha* and *La Nuit et le Moment* could not endure. It depended too much upon the continuance of a political constitution which, as many thinking men could already see, was doomed. So long as money flowed in freely, and the nobility retained its privileges intact, what need to worry? Life went on in a round of pleasure and amusement, and no one took it very seriously. The picture of light gallantry which Crébillon gives us is far from unattractive. Whatever the stern moralist might say, the wit *was* wit. Artificial the manners might be, thoughtless the frail ladies and their lovers, but they are not vulgar. Real emotion was at a discount. It was ridiculous to allow oneself to feel too keenly, and nothing was more to be feared than ridicule.

But such an outlook on life could not be permanent. The deeper emotions cannot be altogether disregarded; and in the middle of the century they were given startling expression by J. J. Rousseau. In opposition to the cult of frivolity, arose the cult of sentiment which, even if sometimes no less absurd, was based on more solid foundations. The twin currents of sentiment and a newly-awakened interest in nature blended in the *Nouvelle Héloise*, published in 1761. "Rousseau," says Sainte-Beuve, "was like a meteor which fired the heads and hearts of women, and kindled

their imagination."[1] Sentiment had pierced through the affectation of Marivaux in *Marianne*, it had been applauded to the skies in the plays of La Chaussée. The romances of Richardson attained a vogue in Paris which seems barely credible to readers of the present day. Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, which rather staggered its English readers, was received with acclamation in France, and it's author's visit to the capital was like a triumphal procession. Allied with this revival of sentiment, came a morbid attraction towards the gruesome and the horrible. Young's *Night Thoughts*, dull and rhetorical as they are, were read with avidity, and Hervey's *Meditations on the Tomb* gave a thrill of delightful terror. The anodyne pastorals of Gessner, whose *Death of Abel* was translated by Huber, with Turgot's help, in 1759, were immensely popular, and Thomson's *Seasons* were the prototype of Saint-Lambert's *Saisons* and *Les Mois* of Roucher.

To one who, like Mlle de Lespinasse, was naturally emotional, there was food in plenty for the imagination. Rousseau and Gessner were her chief delight; and although she rarely left her Parisian home, she could enjoy a stroll in the Invalides, and feel that a day in the country with the person she loved best would be an incomparable joy. Over Roucher's poems, she became ecstatic; but her delight came less from his descriptions of natural scenery than from the evidence of passion which he showed. "That man has *loved*." For this reason, too, Sterne was a favourite with her. So well had she studied him that she could write two chapters as a sequel to the *Sentimental Journey*[2]; and succeeded in catching the very manner of the original.

[1] Sainte-Beuve, Nouveaux Lundis, Vol. 4, p. 4.

[2] These chapters were first published in the "Oeuvres posthumes" of d'Alembert, 1799, t. 2, p. 1.

For, after all, Mlle de Lespinasse was not an early romantic. She cannot be ticketed and pigeon-holed as a specimen of some stage in literary or social history. She was, as she was bound to be, under the influence of the currents which were fast setting towards the Revolution and the Romantic Revival; but it is because of her own personality that she is a living, and a moving, figure.

It was not her beauty which captivated Julie's friends. She was, says Guibert,[1] far from pretty, and her face was disfigured by small-pox. She was certainly tall and graceful, but her great quality was the undefinable one of charm. She possessed in the highest degree the art of bringing out all the best points of others; and everyone would leave her house sure that he had been at his best, and convinced that his hostess was a most delightful woman. "Without fortune, birth, or beauty, she succeeded in collecting at her house a very numerous, varied and assiduous company. Her circle was renewed daily, from five till nine. One could be sure of finding chosen men of every order in the State, prelates, courtiers, soldiers, foreigners and the most distinguished men of letters. Everyone agrees that if the name of d'Alembert, with whom Mlle de Lespinasse had been living for several years, had first attracted them, she alone had kept them."[2] How did she do it? Grimm tells us: "Never had anyone a greater talent for society. . . Without seeming to take the slightest trouble, by a word adroitly thrown in, she kept up the conversation, gave it new life and varied it at her will. . . . . One would have said that the charm of some invisible power constantly brought back all private interests to

[1] Guibert: Eloge d'Eliza. First published in a collection of his *Eloges* in 1806.

[2] Grimm, op. cit., 11, p. 263.

the common centre."[1] Julie herself gives an explanation of her success: "You know a person who has all her life lacked attractiveness of feature and the graces which can please, interest and touch, and yet this person has had more successes, and been a thousand times more beloved than she could ever have claimed to be. Do you know the secret of this? It is because she has had the truth of everything, and has in addition been true in everything."[2] So indeed it was; and her very sincerity was the reason for the partial cloud under which she rested after her death. "She is infinitely more regretted by her acquaintances than by her friends," we are told.[3] For with her sincerity went a total lack of moderation. The word was hateful to her; it was a virtue made for the inhabitants of Limbo, and she was afraid of being condemned to it. "I have known only the climate of Hell on one side, of Heaven on the other."[4] And so the unfortunate d'Alembert who had lived in the same house with her for years (though nothing was more innocent than their friendship, and even malignity never attacked it, Marmontel carefully assures us)[5], who had acted as her secretary, and given his whole heart to her, found out at last that for eight years she had loved another; and all her friends were aware that her life contained at least one tragic affection. Outwardly charming, delightful, she never showed her deepest feelings, and so, though her friendship was true enough, it was never quite complete. It was impossible ever really to know her. She was perfectly genuine. She liked the people who came to her

[1] ib., p. 264.
[2] *Infra*, letter 167.
[3] Grimm, op. cit., II, p. 265.
[4] *Infra*, letter 162.
[5] Marmontel, op. cit., p. 245.

house. She was really fond of Turgot, whose illness worried her greatly: he was no longer the minister then, but the old and valued friend. She appreciated d'Alembert, and had a motherly affection for Condorcet. But, behind it all, lay something hidden, a secret revealed to none. She had no confidant. She was alone—and her friends must have felt it. All through her long illness, when they urged her to see the best doctors in Paris, or helplessly watched her dreadful fits of coughing, there was a something which they could not understand. No one, indeed, did understand it, until the Letters were published. Then Mme Suard, as she read, cried in amazement to her husband: "Why! she loved M. de Guibert," "So I have just learned," he replied.

That her affection for Guibert remained so long unsuspected is not, after all, so extraordinary. It was impossible for her to risk an avowal of it. She was terrified lest the too indiscreet Guibert should rashly reveal it. And she was helped in the effort by the strength and the weakness of her character. Capable of the most intense feeling, ready to undergo martyrdom when she loved, she also had a kind of delight in self-torture, which was allied to that *plaisir des larmes* characteristic of Rousseau the sentimentalist. She almost enjoyed, one might believe, the feeling that she, who appeared so gay and witty, was in reality the centre of a storm of emotion such as none of her guests could ever experience. To some people, undoubtedly, utter misery may become a kind of pleasure: Mlle de Lepinasse knew it to the full. But it would be wrong to suppose that she was merely morbid. She never lost all grip of reality. She was ill in body and in mind, and she re-acted with all her strength against the collapse which became inevitable. The time came when her strength was broken, and the only remedy was death.

It is only by reading the letters themselves that the full force of the tragedy can be felt. They cover a period of three years, from May 1773 to May 1776. They are addressed to the comte de Guibert, but from the very first it is clear that the writer's feelings are complicated. She half regrets meeting her new friend but yet he re-animates her mind and brings her pleasure. But what fatality caused him to come and distract her attention? What of the feelings of another? "Two months ago I had no sacrifice to make for him. . . . But he will forgive me." The seeds of disaster are already there. The remorse which, in another woman might be stifled or allowed to die a natural death, Julie could never dismiss from her mind. She could never forget that before she cared for Guibert, she had loved the marquis de Mora.

José y Gonzaga, marquis de Mora,[1] was a son of the conde de Fuentès, one of the foremost Spanish diplomats of the day. Born in 1744, he was only twenty when he first visited Paris. He had been married at fourteen, but his wife had died soon after the birth of a son, and he came to Paris eager to learn all that could be learned in the most brilliant capital in Europe. Clever, gracious, with all the traditional Spanish courtesy, he was free from the pride which so often accompanied it, and evidently impressed his contemporaries as a man of exceptional ability. "Spain was not worthy to possess a de Mora," wrote Galiani, after his death; and this extravagant claim is typical of the enthusiasm which he aroused. Voltaire received him as an honoured guest at Ferney. There is no reason to doubt that his charm of manner and his intellectual powers were remarkable.

[1] See de Ségur, op. cit., ch. 9-10.

It would seem that he first met Mlle de Lespinasse in 1766. He captured her admiration at once. Writing to the Baron d'Holbach, she says : " This man fulfills my idea of perfection ! "[1] It was a reciprocal attraction. De Mora was in a state of mind to fall under the spell of a woman who so completely sympathised with him. Julie's heart, whether or not it had been touched by the affection of d'Alembert and Hénault, had certainly been kindled by the passion of an Irishman named Taafe. Madame du Deffand had been a watchful chaperone, and nipped the romance in the bud, but this time she was powerless. De Mora was sent back to Madrid, for his parents highly disapproved his obvious attachment to Julie. But he soon contrived to return, and the mutual affection was only strengthened by a second sojourn in Madrid. But a disaster was imminent. De Mora's health, never strong, broke down completely, and in 1771 he was forced to go to the south of France for a change of climate. He improved sufficiently to return to Paris, and this was perhaps the time when Julie tasted the most perfect happiness. If he was away for a few days, he wrote to her twice a day. " In an absence of ten days I had twenty-two letters," says Julie. All smaller interests were swallowed up in this one overpowering emotion. " Utterly given up to the happiness of loving and being loved, I needed neither strength nor honesty to endure poverty and disdain the advantages of vanity."[2] If he was passionately in love, so too was she. " He compared what he had loved, what he still loved, and constantly said to me : Oh ! they are not worthy to be your pupils. Your soul was warmed by the sun of Lima, my countrywomen seem born beneath the ice-bergs of Lapland."

[1] De Ségur, op. cit., p. 317. [2] *Infra*, Letter 120.

It seems most probable that marriage was the aim of both the lovers. Certainly Julie never tried to hide her affection for de Mora. And in after years she could reproach Guibert in words which can leave little doubt that she had yielded to no one but him: "It seems to have been all in vain that I remained honest until I met you." To be married to de Mora, was, however, not her destiny. His health once more broke down, and in August, 1772, he left Paris for the last time. In February 1774 he barely survived a serious crisis, and in May of that year, as he was on his way to Paris, in a final effort to rejoin the object of his affections, he died.

But for some time before his death he had a rival; Mlle de Lespinasse had been swept away by the invincible attraction of Jacques-Antoine-Hippolyte, comte de Guibert. Born in 1743, he had entered the army at an early age, and given proof both of courage and of powers of leadership. But his main title to admiration was his *Essai général de Tactique*, first printed in Holland in 1770, and not openly distributed in Paris until 1773. This work brought him immediate fame. Philosophers and soldiers united in praising it. His ideas on tactics, far in advance of those generally accepted at the time, were regarded as sound by Napoleon himself. Guibert was one of the first to champion the attack in line rather than in mass formation. His political theories, exposed in the first half of the book, ensured him the favour of the philosophers. It was a period of rapid enthusiasms, and Paris raved over Guibert. Women in particular worshipped him. He was not especially good-looking. "His face," says Mlle de Lespinasse, "is handsome without being distinguished; his features are regular, but have not much play in them."[1] But "his conversation was the most varied, animated and

[1] De Ségur, op. cit., p. 380-381.

eloquent" that Mme de Stael had ever heard. Ambitious, quick of apprehension, full of fire and life, he was just the kind of man to attract Julie de Lespinasse.

They met in June 1772 in the pleasure gardens of Moulin Joli, the creation of the banker Watelet. Landscape-gardening was freeing itself from the conventions of Le Nôtre, and attempts were being made to imitate the English gardens. Watelet's effort was, in the eyes of his friends, delightful, but Horace Walpole could see little in it. "Instead of finding, as I expected, a windmill made of ivory and inlaid with false stones; instead of Dryads and Hamadryads gathering acorns in baskets of gauze, M. Watelet has jumped back into nature, when she was not above five hundred years old: in one word his *island* differs in nothing from a French garden into which no mortal has set his foot for the last century. . . . This effort of genius is the more provoking as the situation is charming."[1]

But its air of wild simplicity appealed to Guibert and to Mlle de Lespinasse. They met and talked. They became interested in each other and before long Julie was writing him a note suggesting that he should visit her *salon*. The friendship ripened apace. Both had experienced unhappiness; and Guibert's elequence concealed the essential emptiness of his emotions. Julie had not yet discovered how incapable he was of making a "sensitive woman" happy; in May of the following year she knew it. By then she had discovered that glory, popularity, reputation, were all very fine things, but were also very cold.[2] Ambition was indeed the key-note of Guibert's character. All his talents were subservient to it; and

[1] Letters of H. Walpole, ed. Toynbee, vol. 9, p. 241.

[2] *Infra*, Letter 4.

he preferred the adulation of women to honeſt criticism. He deceived himself into a belief that it was not ambition he felt, but the knowledge of his own ſtrength;[1] and although as time went on, Julie could not fail to see that to him love was only a plaything, ſtill she was sure of his deſtined fame: "they are working to-day to prepare your glory."[2] After all, the man who could turn from the discussion of military tactics to the composition of tragedies, and win the warm approbation of the Queen for his *Conſtable of Bourbon*, had qualities above the ordinary; and his versatility was remarkable. If he could not rival Turenne, for want of opportunity, he could attempt to rival Corneille. He seemed to have succeeded when the firſt representation of the *Conſtable* was a brilliant triumph. But he could not leave well alone, and the re-touched tragedy was a dismal failure. As Julie told him, if he tried to be more than a gifted amateur he challenged comparison with Voltaire and Corneille, and criticism became at once less kindly. Surely the firſt success was enough; he had earned a high place already.[3]

If Julie had confined herself to this friendly intereſt in Guibert's work, all would have been well. But it was a dangerous path upon which she entered that day at Moulin Joli. Gradually, hardly realising it, she began to forget the old affection for de Mora, and looking to Guibert for help in her troubles, she came to lean almoſt entirely upon him. His travels in Germany in the summer and autumn of 1773 only confirmed her feelings. De Mora was away, he was ill, the thought of his suffering was torment to her. Guibert could console and comfort her. Jealousy

[1] *Infra*, Letter 166.
[2] *Infra*, Letter 169.
[3] *Infra*, Letter 186.

came to trouble her emotions even more. Was not madame de Montsauge, that dull, uninspired creature, more to Guibert than he admitted ? Did he not see too much of her ? The winter of 1773-74 came. Guibert returned, and Julie saw him almost daily. At last, on February 10, 1774, she gave herself to him.

That very day de Mora was struck down by a violent attack of illness. The news did not reach Paris till much later, but when it came, it overwhelmed Julie with horror. The coincidence was too striking ; her fault was punished only too severely. And when, in June, the news came of his death, she was beside herself with grief, she could not sleep, everything seemed empty and useless. She learned details of de Mora's last hours : " I saw his writing again, I read words which I ought not to have survived. Oh ! My blood, my life, would be but a feeble price to pay for such an affection."[1] She hated the passion which had made her so guilty, and yet in Guibert alone could she find any comfort. " You and my grief are all that are left to me in the world."[2]

But from this time on the struggle between remorse and affection could never be stilled. The only chance of peace depended upon Guibert. If he had really cared for her the end might have been different ; it would at least have been free from the worst agony. But Guibert's main object was always his own fortune. Before long it became clear to him that he could only restore his unstable finances in one way : by marriage. And clearly he could not marry Julie. He told her of his plans, of his dread of being compelled to live in the provinces. And Julie, in desperation, was tempted to help him. In a passage

[1] *Infra*, Letter 32. [2] *Infra*, Letter 35.

which one can only read with very mixed emotions, she suggests "a young person of sixteen," who would not be a nuisance because she would stay for some years with her mother, and had the great advantage of a fortune of not less than 600,000 francs.[1] Certainly such a wife would be most suitable in Julie's eyes; but the project was never seriously considered. When Guibert replies that "if I am forced to decide on marriage, I should like it to come through you,"[2] she does her best to show that for a man like him marriage is the last thing to be desired: "it is a real extinguisher of everything that is great; if one is honourable and sensitive enough to make a good husband, one is nothing else."[3] And she adds that some men are made to be great and not to be happy. But Guibert was quite decided in his own mind, and with only one hint of warning,[4] he became affianced to Alexandrine Boutinon des Hayes de Courcelles. Mlle de Lespinasse met her and admitted that she was charming;[5] but the marriage, which took place in June, 1775, was a blow from which she never recovered. Guibert, on his side, showed his usual lack of sensitiveness, and wrote a note to Julie which she could only describe as a "masterpiece of coldness and harshness." She replied on July 1, 1775, in words of burning reproach, but she could not give up her love. on 3 July, she is longing to be friends again: he alone could sustain and support her. She was desperately ill, in constant pain, and even a little comfort seemed enough.

An opportunity soon came to prove her friendship. The Academy had offered a prize for the best *Eulogy*

[1] *Infra*, Letter 73.
[2] *Infra*, Letter 81.
[3] *Infra*, Letter 82.
[4] *Infra*, Letter 120.
[5] *Infra*, Letter 126.

of the general Catinat. Guibert intended to compete, and sent his composition to Julie. "But for that accurſed *Eulogy*, I was cured,"[1] she wrote. She uſed all her influence to obtain a decision favourable to him. She read La Harpe's work, and carefully weighed its merits againſt those of Guibert's *Eulogy*, concluding that Guibert's was the better. The Academy was not of the same opinion and Guibert had to endure the ignominy of an *accessit*, bracketed with a young man who was entirely unknown. Julie quarrelled furiously with La Harpe, but was reconciled to him, and helped him to gain election to the Academy.[2]

Life was now little more than a slow agony. Julie's intereſt in everything that concerned Guibert was unabated. She gave him the wise advice not to allow the *Conſtable* to be performed a second time, and took the keeneſt intereſt in the play, although she refused to see it herself. She seems to have used all the knowledge of men she had accumulated, in his service. Never did he need a ſteady and far-seeing friend more than during the anxious times when a new War Miniſter was being appointed; and no one could have offered him saner counsel than Julie. But, if for others she could think so sanely, she could do nothing for herself. Jealousy, remorse, love, ſtruggled for maſtery within her, and physical illness became more and more desperate. Opium, to which she had always resorted as a sedative, became the one means of allaying her pain.

That Guibert suffered under the ſtrain is evident: the ſtream of reproach and regret was more than he could endure. "You muſt lack all delicacy and

[1] *Infra*, Letter 141.

[2] Bachaumont, op. cit., t. 9, 27 May, 1776.

certainly all affection for me, if you can cause my mind such despair,"[1] he wrote, after an evening which must indeed have been painful. Guibert was in a very difficult position; and probably few men would have made a better showing. He was faced by an emotion which he could not in the least understand, and the manifestations of which seemed most unfair to him. He had done his best and all his reward was reproaches. He had to deal with a temperament which admitted of no compromises, and he was quite inadequate to the task. The fire which he had kindled had become a conflagration which nothing could extinguish; and Julie's instinct was not at fault when she wrote that her death would be a relief to him.

It was not long before she at least found rest. She died on 23 May, 1776, and the same night Guibert composed an *Eloge d'Eliza*, in which rhetoric is more apparent than affection. Madame du Deffand, telling Horace Walpole of Julie's death, said "Once it would have been an event for me, now it is nothing at all."[2]

But the words quoted by Guibert illustrate better the feeling of Julie's friends: "The Lord hath smitten the shepherd and the flock is scattered." Never again would "Sister Lespinasse" issue her invitation to the "brethren" of the philosophical "church."[3] The days of the *salon* were drawing to an end. Madame Geoffrin was very ill, and died in 1777; Madame du Deffand, in her old age, was openly at war with the chief leaders of thought. Only madame Necker and madame Helvétius kept up the tradition, but with a greatly diminished brilliance. D'Alembert, heart-broken, retired to the

[1] *Infra*, Letter 222.

[2] Correspondance, t. 2, p. 551.

[3] Grimm, op. cit., 8, p. 438.

rooms in the Louvre to which as Secretary of the Academy he had a right. Guibert himself failed in his dreams of glory and died, a disappointed man, in 1790.

It is inevitable that a certain melancholy should attend the reading of the last pages of the *Letters*. The distress is so genuine, the play of emotion so vividly presented. This alone would be enough to place the book among the select few which give a glimpse of true passion, and tear the veil from the secret places of the human heart. If the tension were not relieved, it would be unbearable.

Fortunately, for all her preoccupation, Mlle de Lespinasse finds time to give lively pictures of her daily social life. So we hear of the horrible plot hatched by madame du Deffand, and of the tribunal composed of the duchesse d'Anville, Caraccioli, M. de Vaines, and Julie herself, which sat in judgment and solemnly decided that madame du Deffand was the most malicious creature that ever lived; the Neapolitan ambassador who saw all the humour of the affair, roaring with laughter all the time. The great quarrel between the Gluckists and the Piccinists is decided definitely in favour of Gluck, for Julie was carried away by the music of *Orpheus* and *Iphigenia*, and would not hear a word against their composer. Not all her friends were of the same opinion, and she would not discuss *Orpheus* with the chevalier de Chastellux, for it would be as cruel as describing colours to a blind man. Chastellux, with his ceaseless flow of wit, was at times too much for Julie. "He has resolved to turn my head. He came again to spend the evening with me. I was almost dead when he entered, and was hardly more alive all the time he spent with me." Still, she did all she could to secure his election to the Academy; it would be a new toy

which would give him pleasure. Guibert was none too pleased, and the mention of Gluck gave him the chance to say that the Chevalier had no *soul.*

Politics were a topic of absorbing interest in the Rue Saint-Dominique. The advent of Turgot and Malesherbes to power was welcomed with frenzied joy by the Parisians. Mlle de Lespinasse was more cautious: "While they are transported with joy at the happiness they hope for, I can only breathe freely again at our escape from misery."[1] In Lord Shelburne she saw an example of what a statesman ought to be. No Frenchman could ever possess his sterling qualities. Montesquieu was right in saying that government makes men: in France there was no chance for a man of energy and genius. Julie would rather be the most undistinguished member of the House of Commons than the king of Prussia: "only the glory of Voltaire could console me for not having been born an Englishwoman."[2] The doctrines of the Revolution would not have sounded strangely in her ears.

Among her friends a sympathetic figure is the comte de Crillon, who married for money and found happiness as well. Julie was not a little disdainful of his sudden domesticity. But she was fond of him, none the less, and was greatly pleased when she could report that his wife and child were out of danger. Her sympathy for illness is shown very clearly in her anxiety about the young vicomte de Saint-Chamans, who was under orders to go to Monaco. She writes to Guibert, only a month before her death, begging him to do everything in his power to obtain leave of absence for him. "In short, my friend, plead for his life, and you will remove from the little which remains for me to endure, one of the most profound griefs that I can now feel."[3]

[1] *Infra*, Letter 52. [2] *Infra*, Letter 86. [3] *Infra*, Letter 231.

Among women, as was not unnatural, Mlle de Lespinasse had fewer friends. Of one only, madame de Châtillon, was she really fond: "No, you cannot imagine all that she invents to touch my heart . . . If you loved me as she does!" Eight years younger than Julie, madame de Châtillon won her affection by giving her own in full measure, and not a little too because it was obviously unnecessary to be jealous of her. The comtesse de Boufflers and madame de Marchais were in a different category. The former was one of the most attractive women of her time, and Guibert, for all his protestations, was not unimpressed by her. But she suffered from a mania for wishing to seem important. As some one said to Julie: "I wager she will do her very best to get herself invited to the minister's dinner at Montigny." And Julie, not at all averse from criticising one whom she suspected of trying to capture Guibert, spent one of her long sleepless nights in thinking about her, and wondering why, in spite of all her attractiveness, she made so little impression. She concluded that it was because, the very reverse of Julie herself, madame de Boufflers possessed the "*truth* of nothing," and so had never been able to touch or interest even the people she most wished to please. Madame de Marchais, whom Marmontel described as a "young fairy," was a far more formidable rival. It mattered not that everyone knew she was devoted to d'Angivillier, whom she afterwards married, and with whom she lived a life of perfect happiness. It would never do for Guibert to see too much of her. And so Julie writes to him: "Yes, you like M. d'Angivillier, but you ought to tell him to make madame Marchais hold her tongue when she says that the first two acts of the *Constable* are pure *machiavellianism*, that the Constable is a detestable part, while Adelaide's is ridiculous." Guibert, who

never liked criticism, was much annoyed, and his friendship with madame Marchais rapidly evaporated.

But if the *Letters* thus incidentally bring to life again the society in which Mlle de Lespinasse lived, it is impossible to escape for long from the devastating emotions which struggled for mastery within her heart. That is the theme which runs through every page. The reader may begin with the feeling that all this is a great pother about very little, but gradually the impression of reality deepens. Here is the truth about one woman's heart. True in everything, she writes just as she feels ; and if, at times, it is evident that her mind is almost unhinged, the very abnormality of the expression she gives to her emotions serves to bring out the essential truth that underlies them. No perfectly normal woman would write as she writes: but no perfectly normal woman would reveal so clearly the deepest feelings of her heart. Here, plain and unvarnished, is the story of a tragedy of which the pathos must come home to all who have been stirred, however slightly, by the most powerful of human emotions. It is the gift, if it be not rather a curse, of intense feeling that has secured for Julie de Lespinasse a place among writers whom the world can never forget.

LOVE-LETTERS
OF
MLLE DE LESPINASSE
AND
THE COMTE DE GUIBERT

Letter I

TO MONSIEUR DE GUIBERT, COLONEL IN COMMAND OF THE CORSICAN LEGION, AT STRASBOURG (Poſt reſtante).

Paris, Saturday evening, 15 *May,* 1773.

You are leaving on Tuesday; and as I cannot tell what impression your departure will make on me, as I do not know whether I shall have either the liberty or the desire to write to you, I want at any rate to speak to you once more, and to make sure of having news of you from Strasbourg. You will tell me if you arrived in good health, if the journey, with all its buſtle, has not already calmed your mind; for your mind is not ill; it only suffers from the ills of which it is the cause, and relaxation and change of intereſts will be quite enough to diſtract it from an access of sentiment which may be painful to you, since you are good and honourable. Yes, you are very kind; I have juſt re-read your letter of this morning; it combines the sweetness of Gessner with the vigour of Jean-Jacques. Ah, Heavens! why write all that can please and touch? and above all, why offer me a gift of which I am not worthy, which I have in no way deserved? Ah, no, no, I do not want your friendship; it would comfort me, but it would irritate my nerves, and I need reſt, I

need to forget you for a little. I want to be honeſt with you and with myself; and, truly, in my present diſtress, I am afraid of deceiving myself; perhaps my remorse is greater than the wrong I have done; perhaps the terror I feel is the very thing which would moſt diſtress the object of my love. I have juſt this moment received a letter so full of confidence in my feelings; he[1] speaks to me of myself, of what I am thinking, of my mind, with the knowledge and the assurance which come only when one is expressing what one feels vividly and deeply. Ah, Heavens! what charm, what fatality, brought you to diſtract me? Why did I not die in September? Then I should have died without a regret, and with no need for self-reproach. Alas! I feel it, even to-day I would die for him; there is no intereſt I would not sacrifice for him. But . . . two months ago I had no sacrifice to make; I did not live more, but I loved better. Oh! He will forgive me! I had suffered so! My body and my mind were so worn out by the long, long pain. The news I received of him sometimes drove me to frenzy; it was then that I met you, then that you brought back my mind to life; you have brought pleasure into my mind; I know not which was the sweeter, to owe it to you, or to feel it.

But tell me, is that the accent of friendship? Is it the accent of truſt? By what am I being carried away? Teach me to know myself; help me to find my feet again; my mind is overwhelmed. Is it you, could it be your departure—what is it that torments me? I can ſtand no more. At this moment I truſt you utterly and entirely, and perhaps I shall never speak to you again. Good-bye; I shall see you

[1] M. de Mora. [Note by the comte de Villeneuve-Guibert.]

tomorrow; and perhaps I shall be embarrassed by what I am writing to you to-day.

Would to heaven you were my friend, or that I had never known you! What do you think? Will you be my friend? Think of it, just once; is that too much?

Letter 2

TO THE SAME

Sunday, 23 May, 1773.

If I was young, pretty and very attractive, I should not fail to find your conduct towards me full of artfulness. But since I am none of these things, since I am the very opposite, I find in it a generosity and an integrity which have won for you an eternal claim upon my mind; you have filled it to overflowing with gratitude, esteem, sentiment, and all those feelings which make for a relationship intimate and full of trust.

I shall not say as much as Montaigne about friendship; but believe me, we shall feel it all the better. If he had felt in his heart all that he says, do you think he would have consented to live after losing such a friend? But that is not the point; I am thinking of you, of the grace, the delicacy, the appositeness of your quotation. You come to my aid; you want me to have nothing to blame myself for; you do not want the memory of you to be a reproach painful to my heart and perhaps insulting to my pride; in a word, you want me to enjoy peacefully the friendship which you offer me, and which you prove to me so sweetly and so charmingly. Yes, I accept it; I make it my own; it will comfort me, and if ever I enjoy your company, it will be the pleasure which I shall most desire and feel.

I do hope you have forgiven me the fault of which I was not guilty. You know well that it would be impossible for me to suspect you of an action which was not kind and honourable. But still I accuse you : that means nothing except that I was weak and blameworthy, and above all that I was so disturbed that I had lost all presence of mind, all freedom of thought. You understand too well and too quickly for me to have any fear that you took it in the wrong way. I am quite sure that your mind does not think it has any cause for complaint of the workings of mine.

I know you only left at half-past five on Thursday. I was at your door two minutes after your departure : I had sent in the morning to find out at what time you had left on Wednesday, and heard, to my great astonishment, that you were still in Paris, and that they did not even know if you were leaving on Thursday. I went myself to find out if you were ill; and, though you will think it horrible, I think I wanted you to be. Still, an inconsistency which I shall not explain to you, I felt relieved when I heard that you had gone. Yes, your absence has made me calm again ; but also I feel more unhappy. You must forgive me for that, and be content with it. I do not know if I regret you ; but I miss you because you give me pleasure, and I think that minds which are active and feel things deeply cling too firmly to that. It is not the idea of the length of your absence which distresses me ; for my thoughts see no end to it ; it is simply the present which weighs upon my mind, disheartens it, saddens it, and hardly leaves it energy enough to wish for a happier disposition.

How detestably selfish I am ! Here are three sheets full of myself, and yet I think it is of you that my thoughts are full : at any rate I feel that I need to know how you live, and how you are. When you read

this, Heavens, how far away you will be! Your body will be only three hundred leagues away; but how far your thoughts have travelled; what new interests; what new ideas and reflections; I seem to be speaking to nothing more than your shadow; all of you that I have known has vanished; you will scarcely find in your memory the traces of the affection which animated and disturbed you during the last days you spent in Paris. And all the better! You are well aware that we agreed that sensibility was the heritage of mediocrity; and your character commands you to be great; your talents condemn you to celebrity. Give yourself up then to your fate, and assure yourself that you are not made for the sweet and intimate life that tenderness and deep feeling demand.

There is only pleasure and no fame to be found in living for a single object. When one can rule only in one heart, one cannot rule over public opinion. There are names made for history; yours will one day rouse men's admiration. When I let this thought sink deep into me, the interest you have roused in me becomes a little less lively. Goodbye.

Letter 3

TO THE SAME

Monday, 24 May, 1773.

What do you think of this madness? Hardly can I flatter myself that you are listening and I overwhelm you! But you said the other day that one always wrote long letters to one's friends, to the people who attract one, to those with whom one would like to talk. If you are telling the truth, you are bound, not indeed to read me with interest, but at any rate to be

indulgent. I have just read this long letter over again; Heavens, how boring it seems! But if I began again, it would not be any better. I feel in the mood to be boring in more than one way: I am unhappy and numbed; what can one make of that? But I have some questions to ask you; answer them, and you will be very kind.

Have you had that letter of Diderot's? He declares that he leaves on the 6th of June; so you will see him in Russia. Why did not you go on Wednesday? Did you bestow those forty-eight hours on someone else, or on yourself? Have you taken M. Thomas' book with you? I should like you to have done so; the reading of it would have pretty well suited your state of mind. It is a noble book, powerful and virtuous; no doubt there are some faults in it; but he has corrected what there was of over-emphasis and exaggeration in his style. There is too much analysis in it, and it is too much of a catalogue: this is a little wearisome, especially when it is a great effort to tear oneself from an object of absorbing interest.

I have been forced to give up reading it for some days. It is the postman who, twice a week, settles all the actions of my life; yesterday's made reading impossible for me; I should only look for the letter I had failed to get, and it was no use looking for it in Thomas: I should not find it.

You promised me news from Strasbourg: are you not now amazed at having undertaken to write to me often? Do you not regret the ease with which you yield to the interest and the eagerness that is shown about you? It is a nuisance, when one is three hundred leagues away, to do things for others; the only pleasure one can find lies in following the impulse of one's journeys and one's feelings. Come, am I not generous? I promise to give you back

your word if you have to reproach yourself with making a mistake. Confess it, and I promise I will not be hurt. Believe that it is only vanity which makes people touchy, and I have none. I am only a kind creature, very stupid, very simple, who prefers the happiness and pleasure of what I love to anything that is only myself and for myself. So knowing this, be quite at your ease, and write to me a *short* letter, *long* letters, *not at all*, but do not suppose that each of these will content me equally, for if I am not vain, still less am I indifferent. But one source of strength I have that makes me equal to anything: it is that I know how to suffer, and to suffer deeply, without complaining.

Good-bye: have you managed to read as far as this? Is it not deadly dull?

Letter 4

TO THE SAME

Sunday, 30 *May*, 1773.

I received your letter from Strasbourg yesterday. It seemed to me that it was a very long time since Wednesday the 19th: that was the day on which I had the last proof of your remembrance of me. The one which came yesterday has comforted me, has done my mind good; it needed to be distracted and occupied by a pleasant feeling to which it might give itself without distress and without regret. Yes, I can admit it to myself, I can tell you yourself: I love you dearly; your absence causes me perceptible regret; but I need no longer fight against the feelings which you inspire in me, I have seen clearly into my mind. Ah! the excess of my unhappiness fully

justifies me. I am not guilty, and yet before long I shall be the victim. I thought I should die on Friday when I received a letter[1] by express messenger. I had no doubt but that it brought me the most fatal news; the distress into which it threw me deprived me even of the power of unsealing my letter. For more than a quarter of an hour I was motionless: my mind had frozen my senses; at last I read it, and found only part of what I had feared. I have no need to tremble for the life of him I love; but while I am sheltered from the greatest of misfortunes, Heavens! how much suffering is left me! How overwhelmed I still feel by the burden of life! This long drawn-out pain is more than human strength can stand; I feel only one kind of courage now, and very often I have only one longing. Must I not love you, must I not cherish your presence? You have the power to divert me from so sharp and so deep-seated a pain: I wait for, I long for your letters. Yes, believe me, it is only the unhappy who are worthy to have friends; if your mind had not suffered, you would never have come into mine. I should have admired, I should have praised your talents, but I should have kept my distance, because I have a kind of repugnance for everything which can only occupy my brain; one must be calm, if one is to think; when one is distressed, one can only feel and suffer. You tell me you are tormented by regret, even by remorse, that your sensibility is only grief. I believe you, and it pains me; but still I do not know why the impression which your letter left on me is so contrary to your mood. I find calm, rest, strength in all your expressions; you seem to be speaking of what you *have* felt, and not of what you are feeling; indeed, if I had any claim on you, if I were difficult to please, if friendship were not easy to me, I should tell you that

[1] From M. de Mora. [Note by the comte de Villeneuve-Guibert.]

Strasbourg is a long way, a very long way from the Rue Taranne.

President Montesquieu declares that climate has a great effect on morals. Can Strasbourg then be more northerly than Paris? Judge what I should have to fear from Petersburg! No, I am not afraid; I believe in you; I believe in your friendship. Explain to me why I should have such confidence; and take care not to imagine that vanity has anything to do with it. My feeling for you is *purged* of that hateful alloy which corrupts and weakens all the affections.

It would have been kind of you to tell me whether my letter was the only one you had at Strasbourg. See how generous I am: I should have liked it to be changed into the one you would have wished to find there. Settle our seniority, give me my place; but as I do not like change, give me a fairly good one. I should have no desire for that which you give on *sufferance* to one unlucky person: she is displeased with you; no more have I any wish for that which you are *condemned* to grant to the other person: you are displeased with her. I do not know where you will put me; but manage it, if you can, so that we are both content; do not quibble, grant me much, and you will see that I shall not take advantage of it. Oh! you will see how well I know how to love! Love is my being, love is all I know. Poor though the means may be, you know that when they are all bent towards one single end they can do much. Well, I have one thought alone, and that thought fills all my mind and all my life. You think that relaxation and the acquiring of knowledge will take your attention from your friends. Learn to know yourself better, and give in honestly and with a good grace to the power your character has over your will, your feelings and all your actions. People who are ruled by the need to love

never go to *Petersburg*; still sometimes they do go a long way off, but they are condemned to do so, and they do not say that they will *retire into their minds* to find there what they love; they think they have never left it, though they are a thousand miles away. But there is more than one manner of being good and admirable; yours *will take you far* in every sense of the words. I should pity a sensitive woman for whom you were the chief interest; her life would wear away in fears and regrets; but I should congratulate a vain woman, a proud woman; she would spend her life in self-applause and in preening herself on her taste; such women love glory, they love popularity, and splendour. All this is very fine, very noble, but it is very cold, and far indeed from the passion which makes one say:

> Before my eyes both death and hell I see.
> Gladly would I descend, Ramire, for thee!

But I am mad, and, still worse, inquisitive; I have only one tone, one shade, one manner, and when it does not interest, it petrifies with boredom. You will tell me which of the two effects it has produced; but you will tell me too, if you please, how you are; and for my part I will tell you the only news which interests me: the appointment to the *Ecole Militaire*[1] has not yet been made.

[1] The post of governor of the *Ecole Royale Militaire* had been rendered vacant through the recent death of the marquis de Croismare, lieutenant-general. Among the general officers who might hope to be appointed, and one of the most deserving from his record of service, was the comte Charles Benoît de Guibert, lieutenant-general in the King's armies, and father of M. de Guibert. The person appointed was, we believe, the Marquis de Monteynard; but some years later, in 1782, the comte de Guibert *père* was made governor-general of the *Invalides*, a dignity to which the functions of superintendent of the *Ecole militaire* had been added. His tomb is to be seen in the chapel of the *hotel royal des Invalides*. [Note by the comte de Villeneuve-Guibert.]

Letter 5

TO THE SAME

6 June, 1773.

Heavens, how rare are the things which give one pleasure, and how slowly they come. It seems an eternity since the 24th, and I do not know how much longer I shall still have to wait for a letter from Dresden ; but at least, tell me, are you still disposed to write to me as much as you can ? Shall I meet no obstacles to my pleasure, to my interest, save such things as do not depend on you, I mean distance and the slowness of the post ? I loathe Russia ; till you wanted to go there, I only hated the Russians ; good heavens, what will you see there ? Everything one ought to flee from and be able to ignore all one's life : you will see what your soul detests, slavery and tyranny, servility and insolence. I know very well that in many respects you can say, " just as it is at home " ; but still our vices are toned down by our faults, while in that country excessive corruption and degradation is modified only by excessive misery. Everything, no doubt, is worthy of a philosopher's observation ; naturalists observe frogs and spiders with as much interest as tigers and elephants ; but for my part, it distresses me to find that your curiosity, your activity, in a word both your natural talents and your factitious virtues are alike against me. This love of fame, for instance, will make your friendship, or rather mine, only one more disaster in my life ; yet you can already say to me, as the hermit said to Zadig : *I have sometimes brought a feeling of consolation into the minds of the unhappy*. Yes, I owe to you that which makes the charm and the sweetness of friendship ; I feel that this bond is already too strong, that it has taken too

deep a hold upon my mind. When my mind is suffering, it is tempted to turn to you to seek consolation, and, if it were at peace, it would be led on by an even more active emotion, by the desire for pleasure. Think whether I mean as much as that to you, and whether indeed I have not better reason to love you and regret you. At most, you have found my feeling for you pleasant and, for my part, before I ever weighed your merits, you became necessary to me. But what do you think of a mind that gives itself before it knows whether it will be accepted? Before ever looking whether it will be received with pleasure or with gratitude? Heavens, if you did not feel deeply, what grief you would cause me! For it is not enough for you to be honourable: I have virtuous friends, and still better than that, and yet I am absorbed in what you are to me; but, honestly, is it not foolish, perhaps even ridiculous, for me to think you my friend? Answer me, not coldly, but truly. Though your mind is disturbed, it is not in such evil case as mine, which passes ceaselessly from convulsions to prostration. I can judge of nothing, I should always be deciding wrongly, I should take poison instead of a sedative; see whether I can look after myself, enlighten me, strengthen me; I will believe you, you shall be my support, you shall help me as reflection would: for reflection is no more in my power, I cannot foresee anything. I am smitten with terror, I can see nothing clearly; imagine my wretchedness; I find no rest but in the idea of death; there are days when it is my only hope, but also I feel just the opposite emotion, I sometimes feel as if I were bound hand and foot to life; the thought of distressing the object of my love takes from me even the wish to find relief, if it were at the expense of his tranquillity. In short, what shall I say to you? The excess of my inconsistency bewilders

my brain, and the burden of life overwhelms my mind. What ought I to do ? What will become of me ? Will it be Charenton,[1] or my parish, that will deliver me from myself ? I am making you the victim, and I am grieved at it, if you are interested enough in me to take a share in my suffering: and I shall die of shame if I have only bored you. Don't think you can hide it from me; however cleverly you tried, you could not deceive my interest; but content it by telling me how you are: are you getting as much pleasure as you hoped from your journey, or less ? Is your health better than it was the last few days you spent here ? Are you pleased with your valet ? No doubt, such things do not make happiness or unhappiness, but they do make annoyance or content, and for that reason are worth counting. You are very modest, you have not told me how they fêted you at Strasbourg. Verses were made in your honour, they were very bad, but the intention was so good! Don't be cross, but answer me: have you read the *Constable*[2] on your journey ? I don't mean to the post masters, but in good company. Talking of the *Constable*, if you had any delicate feelings, if you were *only* like

[1] The famous lunatic asylum, founded in 1641.

[2] The *Constable of Bourbon*, a tragedy by M. de Guibert, composed when he was about 25, but later re-cast by him. The play was chosen on its reputation to be produced for the first time, at the Court, in the theatre at Versailles, on 26 August, 1775, on the occasion of the wedding festivities of Madame Clotilde, the king's daughter, and Charles Emmanuel of Savoy. It was thought that the plot of the play in itself made the choice unsuitable. And, indeed, it was not the time to recall to mind a war between France and Italy. This feeling was damaging to the success of the play. It was, however, produced a second time in the theatre at Versailles, on 3 December of the same year, for the comte and comtesse d'Artois. This time it was applauded, a thing which at that time was contrary to the rules of etiquette at Court. [Note by the comte de Villeneuve-Guibert.]

Montaigne, and regarded me as La Boëtie, how I should pity you for having denied yourself the pleasure of giving me a mark of confidence, of friendship and esteem! I am not boasting, but I assure you I should be torn by remorse, if I had treated you like that. What does that prove, tell me? Good-bye, I know all the *difference* in our affections, teach me where they are alike: never will that game have been played with such interest.

Letter 6

TO THE SAME, AT BERLIN

Sunday 20 June, 1773.

But, good heavens, are you dead, or can you have already forgotten that your memory is lively and painful in the minds of the people you have left? Not a word from you since the 24th of May. It is very difficult to believe that it is not a little your fault. If that is the case, you deserve neither the regret my heart feels, nor the reproaches it makes you. I have learned that M. d'Aguesseau had not had news of you. So true and so deep is my interest in you that I should have been delighted if I had been able to hear that you had given him preference over me. He deserves it no doubt, from every point of view; but it is not justice that rules feelings; do you think that if that virtue guided me, I ought to be disturbed by your silence, and to need the evidence of your friendship? Alas! no, I could not even explain to myself why I think about you at this moment. I heard yesterday news which has overwhelmed my mind with grief; I spent the night in tears, and when my head and my whole body were worn out, when I could at last have a

moment which was not pain, I thought of you, and it seemed to me, that if you had been here, I should have sent you word that I was suffering, and that perhaps you would not have refused to come. Tell me if I am mistaken; when my mind suffers, am I wrong to seek consolation in yours? In the midst of so many changes of scene, of so many interests so different from the emotions which touch and move one, you can still understand language which is so foreign to most people who are led on by the delights of amusement, or intoxicated by vanity. It is hardly better known to those who, like you, are possessed with the desire to know, with the love of fame. You are so convinced that sensibility is the heritage of mediocrity that I die of fear lest your mind should be closed entirely against that emotion, far more harrowing than consoling. I have not written to you for a fortnight, and I thought yesterday that I would only write to you when I had had news from you. Suffering has sapped my strength of mind, and I yield to it. At five this morning I took two grains of opium; it brought me calm, which is of more value than sleep; my grief is less lacerating. My whole mechanism is in a state of collapse; when one's energy is lessened, one can manage to moderate the violence of one's mind. I can speak to you, I can pity myself; yesterday I could find no words. I could not have said that I feared for the life of him I love; it would have been easier for me to die than to utter words which freeze my heart. You have loved, imagine then what such terror is; and until Wednesday I shall live in an uncertainty which is horrible to me, and yet commands me to live till then. Yes, it is not possible to die when one loves and yet it is dreadful to live; death is the most urgent need of my mind, and I feel bound hand and foot to life. Pity me; forgive me for presuming on the

goodness you have shown me. Is it in you, or in myself, that I find the confidence which leads me on?

They say you will not have found the King at Berlin; have you been to join him at Stettin, where he was to be until the 20th? But I am worried, I think one might have news of you from Berlin. How much to be blamed you would be, if you were in the least neglectful! And you know well that you gave me your word of honour that you would have a letter sent to me if you were ill. Do not make use of the pretext, which contents ordinary friendships, that "you do not want to give me uneasiness": that is hateful; I do not want you to spare my feelings; I want to suffer through my friends, for my friends, and I cherish the ills that come to me through them a thousand times more than all the happiness on earth in which they have no part. Good-bye; the opium is still in my head; it makes my eyes bad; perhaps it makes me even more stupid than usual; but what does that matter? It is not my intelligence, but my misfortunes which have won your interest.

Letter 7

TO THE SAME, AT BERLIN

Monday evening, 21 June, 1773.

Here, I think, is my fifth letter to Berlin.

I wrote to you yesterday, and I am writing this evening. If I waited three days, that is, until Wednesday, perhaps I should never answer your letter of the 10th, which the chevalier d'Aguesseau has brought me to-day. First—for there may perhaps still be some future for me—I must tell you to address your letters directly to me; not to do so is to set one more chance

against me ; the chevalier d'Aguesseau may go to the country, travel, etc., etc. In a word, it is quite enough to be a thousand miles away, don't add anything to that. Oh, I shall seem mad to you; I am going to speak to you with the frankness and abandon of one who expected to die the next day; so listen to me with the indulgence and interest which one shows to the dying. Your letter has done me good; I continued to *wait for* it, but I had ceased to *want* it, because my mind could no longer feel any emotion resembling pleasure. Well, shall I tell you ? You have for a few moments distracted my attention from the alarm and terror which absorb my whole life. Ah, Heavens, I fear for his life, my own is bound up with his, and I need to talk to you. Can you imagine what can possibly animate me, and what draws me towards you ? Still, I am not pleased with your friendship ; I see a certain coldness and fickleness in your not telling me why you did not write to me from Dresden, as you promised ; and then you make me feel altogether too clearly that regrets for what you did not find at Berlin have destroyed the kind of peace and pleasure which the evidence and the expression of my friendship might have made you feel. And then, shall I say it ? I am wounded by your thanking me for the interest I have taken in you. Do you think that is the way to answer it ? You will think me very unjust, and very hard to please ; no, it isn't that at all : I am very sincere, very ill and very unhappy ; oh, yes, very unhappy. If I did not tell you what I feel, and what I think, I should not speak to you at all. Do you think that in the agitation that possesses me, I can possibly restrain myself ? I ask you, ought I to be touched by this manner of speaking to me about the prime interest of my life: "Answer me about all that matter, as you can, as you wish."

Oh, yes, as I wish : indeed, you leave me wide liberty ; but you see what I use it for : not to criticise you, but to prove to you what you know even better than I do. I mean that one gets one's tone and one's expressions from what one feels, and if I am not pleased, it is not your fault, and I know it well. So I make no claims, except to that kind of consolation which we so rarely allow ourselves: to utter all our thoughts. We are always kept back by the fear of to-morrow : I feel as free as if there were to be no more to-morrow for me ; and if by any chance I were fated still to live I think I can foresee that I should forgive myself for having told you the truth, even at the risk of having displeased you. Isn't it true ? Our friendship must be great, deep, complete ; our relationship must be tender, firmly based, and intimate, or it must be nothing at all. So I can never repent of having let you see all my heart. If that is not what you wanted, if there has been a mistake, well, let us be honest, let us be neither ashamed nor embarrassed : let us go back to our starting-point, and we will think it has been a dream. We will add this paragraph to the chapter "Experience," and behave like well-brought-up people who know that it is not *polite* to talk of one's dreams. We will say nothing; silence is so pleasant when it can soothe our vanity ! You are unwilling to tell me what *rank* you give me : are you hindered by the feeling of giving too much or too little ? That may be just ; but it is not generous. And yet youth is so splendid, it loves to give and give prodigally ; and here are you as miserly as if you were old or rich. But really, you ask the impossible of me ; you want me to pity you for carrying out your own wishes ; I must oppose you, to bring you back to your real character. Oh, Heavens, a little longer and I answer for it that it will govern you like a tyrant; the habit of victory will

ſtrengthen it—and it needs that so little! You told yourself—and so short a while ago—that it did not matter whether you were happy, so long as you were famous; leave well alone, I can assure you that you will be very conſiſtent: there is nothing vague or hesitating about you but your feelings; your thoughts, your plans, are irrevocably settled. I much deceive myself if you are not made to bring happiness to a vain mind, and despair to a sensitive one. Confess it, what I say there does not displease you; you will forgive me for loving you less, when I prove to you that people will admire you the more for it.

Really it is an extraordinary queſtion you ask! "Has he[1] better reason than I for his absence?" Yes, indeed, he has better reasons; he has one overwhelming reaſon, such that if he overcomes it, the sacrifice of my life would not free me from debt. Every circumſtance, every event, every reason is againſt me; but he is so ſtrongly for me that he does not let me have any doubt as to his return. I shudder at what I may hear on Wednesday: he spits blood, he has been bled twice; when the poſtman left he was well: but the hemorrhage may have begun again: how can I be calm with such thoughts? He himself feared the consequences; whatever expedient he invented to reassure me, I saw his fear. Now tell me if you do not know of whom I am speaking? And tell me ſtill more, that you knew it when I wrote to ask you for the *Conſtable*? Is it delicacy or art that made you seem not to know a name which I did not utter?

But I am saying nothing to you of your journey; precisely because I have nothing to say, since you yourself have not yet made up your mind. If I could believe that I shall live, and that you will never

[1] M. de Mora.

go to Russia, I should eagerly wish for you to be kept in Berlin ; but since I think you will always need to do difficult things, I should like you, since you are on the way already, to go round the world, just so as to have done it. And then, can one rely for a moment on the future ? No sooner will you have come back than you will go off to Montauban ; and then there will be other plans, for you only endure rest when you are planning to go a thousand miles.

Yes, honestly, I think it was a misfortune in my life, that certain day I spent a year ago at Moulin-Joly ! I was very far from needing to form a new friendship ; my life and my mind were so occupied that I was very far from desiring a fresh interest : and, as for you, you had no need of this further proof of all the feelings you can rouse in an honourable and sensitive person. It is pathetic ! Are we free ? Is it possible for all that *is* to be otherwise ? So then you are not free to tell me if you would write often ; and I am not at liberty not to desire it eagerly.

After well *scolding* you, I must still tell you that you were very kind to write to me on your arrival ; I deserved it, indeed I did.

Letter 8

to the same

Thursday, 24 June, 1773.

Three times in one week ! It is too much, far too much, isn't it ? But it is because I am fond enough of you to think that I may have disturbed you. You must be a little impatient to know whether I still exist ; well, yes ! I am condemned to live ; I am no more free to die ; I should harm some one who loves

life for my sake. I have had his news of the 10th; it does not entirely reassure me, but I hope the accident will have no fatal results; I even hope it will hasten his return; but heat is deadly to him, so I must wait. Oh, God! to see pleasure always afar off, always deferred, and to be overwhelmed, crushed by unhappiness! If you knew how I need rest; for a whole year I have been on the rack. You alone, perhaps, have had the power to suspend my grief for an instant; and this monetary benefit has attached me to you for life.

But tell me, did not my last letter displease you? Am I not out of favour with you? I should be very sorry for it. But I am like madame du Châtelet: I hardly know what repentance means. Answer me with the frankness I used towards you: esteem me enough not to tell me half-truths, tell me all the ill you think of me; and it is not, as La Rochefoucauld says, for the pleasure of having you speak of it that I ask you to tell me, but so that I may judge whether you are my friend, whether you will be my friend. In a word, I attach enough interest to our relationship to be eager to know how much surprise and misunderstanding there was in what brought us together. They say there is nothing stronger or more securely founded than feelings for which one can give no reason. If that is true, I ought to rely on your friendship; but you do not want me to look into it: why not? Should I not be pleased? Don't you realise that the most natural inclination when one obtains a new gift is to examine it, to look at it from all sides; that occupation is perhaps the keenest delight that possession gives. But you do not know all the details and all the pleasures of sensibility; all that is lofty, all that is noble, all that is grand, *that* is your province, The heroes of Corneille fix your attention; you have

hardly cast a glance at the little shepherds of Gessner. You love to admire, while I have only one need, one desire: to love. But what does it matter? There is a kind of instinct which makes up for everything: but nothing makes up for a distance of a thousand miles.

I was so disturbed last time, that I never told you that Diderot is in Holland; he is so comfortable there, he has already so many friends—whom he had never seen—that it is quite possible he will never come back to Paris, and will forget that he was on his way to Russia. He is an extraordinary man: he is out of his element in society. He ought to be the leader of a sect, a Greek philosopher, instructing, teaching the young. I like him very much, but nothing in his manner touches my heart; his sensibility is all on the surface, he goes no further than emotion. Oh, how much more to my taste are Jean Jacques, and the *Constable!* I like nothing that goes by halves, that is undecided, that is only a little. I do not understand the language of worldly people: they amuse themselves, and yawn; they have friends, and they love nothing. All that kind of thing seems to me deplorable; yes, I prefer the torture that consumes my mind to the pleasure that benumbs theirs. But if one is like that, one is not amiable; oh well, one can do without that; no, one isn't amiable, but one is loved, and that is worth a thousand times more than to give pleasure.

But how I should like to know if you will go to Russia! I hope not, and it is as you say: because I do not want you to. I think that from nowhere in the world do letters come so slowly as from Russia. You will see if it was worth while to travel six hundred leagues. I have re-read your letter twice, three times, first because it was difficult, and then because I was

difficult. Oh, if you knew how many faults of omission I have found in it. But why shouldn't you make them? M. d'Alembert awaits your letter with the greatest impatience. M. de Crillon has forestalled you. Your friend, M. d'Aguesseau seems to me—at least on the day he brought me your letter—very strange. He is like a person in distress: his movements have something convulsive about them. He says he is ill, and I believe it; he is planning to go to Spa. I do not know, but I am very glad he is not with you.

Farewell, I have overwhelmed you with questions, and you do not answer. I do not ask if you would find it pleasant to hear the news, because it would be beyond my power to pay attention to it.

I know what is not yet generally known, that M. d'Aranda has been appointed Spanish Ambassador in place of M. de Fuentes, and that the latter has been given the chief position at his court. All that is of no interest to you, and, you will be astonished at it, it does interest me a great deal. Must not I be mad to go and interest myself in what is happening at Madrid? Farewell once more. My kind of madness deserves your pity. Let me have your news, often, and at length. Share, if you can, the pleasure you will give me. How many letters are there that you will be more eager to open than mine? Three? ten?

Letter 9

TO THE SAME, AT BERLIN

Thursday, 1 *July*, 1773.

If you knew how unjust I am! How much I have accused you! How often I told myself that I ought not to expect or desire anything from your friendship.

And the reason of it all is that I did not get news of you. Tell me then why one expects things from, why one makes demands on, a person on whom one does not rely? But truly I believe you will forgive my inconsistency; but for my part, I ought not to be so indulgent. It affects me more closely than it does you; I no longer know what I owe you, I no longer know what I am giving you. I know that your absence weighs heavily on me, and I could not answer for it that your presence would do me good. But Heavens, what a horrible position to be in, when pleasure, consolation, friendship, in a word everything, becomes a poison. What am I to do, tell me? Where am I to recover tranquillity? I know not where I find the strength to resist such deep and contradictory impressions.

How often one dies before one is dead! Everything torments me and hurts me, and I am deprived of the power to free myself from the burden which overwhelms me. When I am in the lowest depths of misery, people want me to live, they tear me equally by the despair and the tenderness they rouse in me. Ah, Heavens, to love, to be loved, is then no blessing. I am suffering every ill, and on top of it all I have to reproach myself with disturbing the tranquillity, with causing the unhappiness, of him I love. My mind is worn out by grief, my mechanism is in collapse, and yet I live, and I must live. Why do you desire it too? What does my life matter to you? What value can you set on it? What am I to you? Your mind is so busy, your life so occupied and so full of movement. How can you find time to pity my woes, and how can you have enough sensibility left to respond to my friendship? Yes, you are too kind; you have the accent of interest, and it seems to me that I ought not to inspire you with any. My letters are necessary

to you: can that be true? Yes, since you say so. But why were you so long in writing to me? Why did you not address your letters direct to me? Strasbourg delayed them two or three days. That is nothing to one who spends eight months on satisfying his curiosity, but it is a great deal too much for one who henceforward knows only one kind of interest in life.

I am delighted, and this is what I meant to begin by saying, that you were pleased with the King of Prussia. What you tell me of the "magical vapour" which surrounded him is so charming, so noble, so apt, that I could never keep it to myself; I have read it to all who deserved to hear it. Mme Geoffrin wanted me to give her a copy of it. I have sent it to higher quarters, and that will be appreciated. So you are not going to Russia? That gives me genuine pleasure. Yes, let me tell you again how delightful I find your friendship. You answer everything, you chat, you are even nearer one when you are a thousand miles away.

But how comes it about that that woman[1] does not love you to desperation? As you would like to be loved? As you deserve to be? On what then can she spend her mind and her life? Ah, yes, she has no taste, no sensibility, I am sure of it. She ought to love you, if it were only from vanity. But in what am I going to interfere? You are content, or if you are not, you love the ill she does you. . . . So why should I pity you? But that other wretched creature, she *does* interest me; have you written to her? Is her unhappiness still as profound as ever?

I must tell you that the other day, at the comtesse de Boufflers', there was much talk of you and of the *Constable of Bourbon*. The young Boufflers told me

[1] Madame de Montsauge. [V.-G.]

she thought you were deeply in love and that had made her watch madame de M . . . closely. There was a man there who declared you were not so any longer, that you had loved her, but it had worn off, and he thought you would never be long happy or unhappy on account of the same woman, the activity of your mind would not let it attach itself for long to the same object; and, out of all this arose a *witty* discussion on things of the feelings, and on passion. The comtesse de Boufflers ended by saying that she did not know with whom you were in love, it was no longer Madame de M . . .[1], but she judged, from the notes she had had from you on your departure, that you were deeply attached, and that your going away would rend your heart. And then came the very natural reflection: "But then why go to Russia? —But, perhaps it is to cure himself? Perhaps it is to excite the feelings of the person he loves." At last, after much uninteresting guessing, they asked me if I was fond of you, if I knew you very well; for I had not said a word. "Yes, I like him very much, and when one only knows a person slightly, that is the only way one can like him."—"Oh, then you know about

[1] Madame de Montsauge, who will so often be mentioned in these letters, was the continual object of Mlle de Lespinasse's incessant and ever-wakeful jealousy; her liaison with M. de Guibert, when the latter made the acquaintance of Mlle de Lespinasse in the spring 1772, is a sufficient explanation of this jealousy. Jeanne Bouret, third daughter of the farmer-general Bouret, who lived in Paris, on the *Rempart*, No. 9, married about 1758 Philibert Thiroux de Montsauge director and administrator of the postal services in 1778. They had a daughter (Claude Marie) who was married in 1778 to Etienne Narcisse, vicomte de Durfort, second-in-command of the Royal Dragoons. Of Madame de Montsauge's two sisters, the elder had married M. de Vilmorien, and the younger M. Marion de la Haye, farmer-general. In Mlle de Lespinasse's autograph letters Madame de Montsauge is almost always indicated simply by the initials "Madame de M . . ." [Note by the comte de Villeneuve-Guibert.]

his relationships, what is the object of his passion? —"No, really I know nothing at all. I know he is at Berlin, that he is in good health, that the King received him extremely well, that he will see his troops, that he will go to Silesia. That is what I know, that is what interests me." And then the conversation turned to the Opera, to Mme la Dauphine and a thousand other *interesting* subjects.

I relate all this in order to tell you that it displeases me that everyone should know your likes and dislikes, your inconstancies. I should like only to hear people talk of your merits, your talents, your virtues: am I wrong?

You wanted to have several letters at Vienna, and it is possible that you have not any, or that you may be overwhelmed with them. I have written three letters to you at Berlin, since the one I wrote on the 6th; no doubt your letters will be forwarded to you; if they waited at Berlin till you went back, they would be very much out of date by the time you received them. But I have confidence in your need to receive those letters of which the deprivation *turns your head.*

Please, do not treat me so well; don't write to me first, because then, without knowing it, you will only write to me to get it written. Only come to me when you have no more to say to *her.* That is the right order; friendship ought only to come afterwards. Sometimes it is a long way off, sometimes too it is very close, too close perhaps; the unhappy love, yes love, everything that brings them consolation; it is so sweet to love what gives one pleasure. I know not why something warns me that I might say of your friendship what the comte d'Argenson said when he first saw pretty Mlle de Berville, who was his niece "Ah, she is very pretty, we must expect her to give us much pain!" What do you think? But you

are so strong, so well balanced, and above all so busy, that you are sheltered from great misfortunes and little annoyances. That is the right way to have intelligence, to have talents; it makes one superior to all that may happen. When one is, in addition, as honourable and as sympathetic as you are, no doubt one feels a certain pain; enough to satisfy an ordinary friendship; but one is soon distracted from the emotions of the soul, when one's brain is eagerly and deeply occupied. Yes, I foretell it, and I am glad of it: you will never again feel the misery that shakes the foundations of the mind; you are still young enough to feel slight shocks, but I answer for it you will soon regain your balance. Ah, I assure you, you will carve out a great career, you will have great fame.

I am going to make you detest me, I am going to show you that my mind is very petty, very mean, but I cannot help it: every time I think of you in days to come, I am frozen; and that is not because I am crushed by greatness, but because greatness attracts admiration and very rarely deserves love. Agree that I am almost as stupid as I am mad: I am far worse than that: I am of the type which, as Voltaire says, is the only bad one. I have the courage to name it, I have filled you so full of it that I need not say it is the *boring* type. Here is the *difference* between our affections; you are at the other end of the world, you are calm enough to enjoy everything; and I am in Paris, I am suffering, and I enjoy nothing: that's all, as Marivaux says.

I have had many details; they have calmed my despair; I have perceived that there was nothing to fear from this last accident, but, think, is it possible to have a moment's rest when one is everlastingly afraid for the life of someone for whom one would at any moment sacrifice one's own? Oh, if you only

knew how charming he is, how much he deserves to be loved! His mind is gentle, tender and ſtrong. I am certain that he is the one man in the world who would please you and suit you beſt; he is full of high-mindedness, of warmth and[1] . . . . . .

You will perhaps forgive me when you realise that it is you who give me these defects, you who have the sole privilege of them. With all my other friends I am the beſt of creatures and the easieſt to get on with; they seem always to pardon me, and to anticipate me. I spend my life in thanking them, and I complain of you, but only to you. I criticise you, I disapprove of you: why this difference?

But can you believe that we have only known each other a year? To me it seems impossible. The reason you give me for refusing to send the *Conſtable* is not a very good one; you know I have a reliable transcriber; but I forgive you.

Letter 10

to the same

Wednesday evening, 14 *July*, 1773.

Heavens, how kind you are, and I wonder at your coming back to me from so far! Busy as you are and in a whirl of amusements, how does it happen that you can ſtill think of one who can have no merit in your eyes but that of having appeared to you capable of love and of suffering? What use will those unlucky talents have for you? You have no need of being loved, and it would vex you to make me suffer; so what possible value can you set on a

[1] Here the paper is torn and some ten lines are missing. [Note by the comte de Villeneuve-Guibert.]

connection in which all the advantage is on my side? You ask me questions which I am in no state to answer. Alas! Calm would be necessary to reply to the questions of indifference: wretchedness, the length of my suffering, have reduced me to a kind of stupidity which deprives me of the power to think; I have only just so much reason left as I need to judge myself, to condemn all my emotions, to be distressed by all my feelings. My mind is in a continual fever, with paroxysms which often bring me to the verge of delirium. Oh, if it were true that from the excess of evil, sometimes good is born, I might hope for some relief. No, I can no longer endure the agitation of the various emotions which tear my heart, and I reproach myself for the weakness which leads me to show what I suffer. I think I have no idea of rousing your interest: I have no right to your sensibility, and if I had, it is not with my grief that I should wish to foster it. No, you owe me nothing, and I am going to prove it to you; I detest, I loathe, the fate which compelled me to write you *that first note*, and perhaps at this very moment, it leads me on as powerfully as ever.

I did not want to speak to you of myself. I wanted simply to thank you for having written to me before you reached Vienna; and I wanted to answer your letter, not to talk to you. I do not take to myself any of your praises; and this for a reason which will astonish you; because they do not praise me. What does it matter to me that you should decide that I am not stupid? It is curious, but true, that you are the one man in the world whom I care least about pleasing; explain this freak to me, and explain too why I judge you with unendurable severity; why I find myself every minute being unjust to you; why, although I do not believe in your friendship, I cavil

at its every expression; why, in a word, with every reason to praise you, I should be tempted to complain of you? Yes, my reason tells me that I ought to beg your pardon, for my thoughts injure you incessantly, and my mind rebels at the mere feeling that you might forgive me. Oh, no, I do not want forgiveness; judge me with all severity, consider all my injuſtice, all my inconsiſtency, and let yourself be swayed by all the feelings that they muſt inspire in you. I have told you, we shall not make out of all this the friendship of Montaigne and La Boëtie: those people were calm, they had only to give themselves up to the mutually pleasant feelings which they received, while we are two sick people, but with this difference, that you are a patient full of ſtrength and reason, and conduct yourself in such a way as soon to enjoy the beſt of health, while I am smitten with a fatal disease, and every alleviation I have tried to bring to it has turned into poison, and has served only to make my ills more sharp. They are of a ſtrange kind. They have spoiled my reason and unhinged my judgment; for I should not like to be cured, I feel only the need of death.

Heavens, how I should hate to travel, how I should hate to devour two hundred books in two months, how I should hate to be worth as much as you, and to be deſtined to so much success and so much fame! If you knew how little my mind is! It sees only one thing in nature which is worth its attention. Cæsar, Voltaire, the King of Prussia, seem sometimes worthy of admiration, but never worthy of envy. I should scandalise you too much if I told you the fate I should prefer to that of any living creature . . . yes, I am like Felix:

> I have emotions which are incredible;
> Violent emotions, pitiable emotions;
> I have even mean emotions . . .

But you would not understand such language, I should make you blush for having been able to think that my mind had anything in common with yours. You do me too much honour by raising me up to your level; but do be very careful not to put me side by side with the women whom you most esteem, you would mortify them and cause me distress. You do not know all that I am *worth*; reflect then that I know how to suffer and to die; and after that see if I am like all those women who know how to please and to amuse themselves. Alas! the one is as distasteful to me as the other would be impossible! I resent everything which distracts me or disturbs my attention. There are objects of which nothing can make me lose sight. What I hear people call dissipation and pleasure only makes me stupid and tires me; and if anything had, or had had, the power to separate me for an instant from my misery, I ought to detest it for doing so. What do you think of it, you who talk of my *happiness*, and make me hope that, if it depends on your friendship, you will give it me? No, Sir, your friendship will not give me happiness, for that is impossible: it will console me, perhaps it will make me suffer, and I know not whether I shall have to praise or to pity myself for what I shall owe you.

Now, why have you the appearance of excusing yourself for having read the *Constable*? It would be rude to refuse yourself the pleasure you can give and receive. The King of Prussia has written a charming letter to D'Alembert; it is full of your praises, and he quite promises himself that he will hear the *Constable*. I am sure he will be delighted with it; the work is in many respects in tune with his mind.

But you are perfectly crazy to want to put the postmen in tune with yours. For heaven's sake don't

speak to me again of the news in the "Gazette"; I never read it, and what rouses the admiration of the masses is as distasteful to me as it is to you. I see, with grief and with pity, that almost all men are born to be dull and to be slaves, but you can bear witness that the emotions of my heart are nobler, more lofty and greater than the things which the silly public respects and admires. Farewell, let me have news of you often, and don't plan to write me four words: keep that for your acquaintances; there are even friends who would be pleased with it, but I am so hard to please! You will tell me if you have received my letters.

Letter 11

to the same, at vienna

From Paris, 25 July, 1773.

Ah, no, make no mistake about it, the longest distances are not those which nature has marked out by mile-stones; the Indies are not so far from Paris as the 27th June is distant from July 15th. That is real distance, that is the awful separation: it is the forgetfulness of the soul: it is like death, and it stings worse, for its sting lasts long. But do not imagine I am reproaching you; oh, heavens, I have no right to do that, you owe me nothing, and for my part I ought to be grateful to you for the marks of your remembrance of me. You will have been overwhelmed by my letters on your return from Hungary; here is the third addressed to Vienna, and they must have forwarded two or three to you from Berlin. Far away as you are, you must, if you please, make use of this trivial formula: "I have had such and such a

letter, etc., etc." I knew long ago, through baron de Koch, a general in the service of the Empress, that the camps would not be held. It is believed here that the Emperor and the King of Prussia have agreed to meet in some town in their new possessions, but you will have employed the time usefully, so you will have little regret for the camps.

What ? honeſtly, do you want me to reduce you to my ſtature ? It muſt then be because it is easier for you to ſtoop than for me to raise myself, and, whatever height I see you at, you will ſtay at your own, which is such that few people can reach it ; but, really, allow me not to consider what you tell me of your character as a result of confidence or friendship. Alas, do you know what you are confessing to me when you reveal the inconsiſtencies which diſtress you ? It is that I am a fool who sees nothing, observes nothing; for undoubtedly, if you are neither a deceiver nor a cheat, I ought to have unravelled for myself what you imagine you are teaching me about yourself : and may I, on my side, teach you something that is profoundly true ? It is that neither you nor I know you perfectly ; you, because you are too near and examine yourself too closely, and I because I have always been afraid and embarrassed when I looked at you. If ever I see you again, I shall observe you better ; I think my eyes are sharper now.

What you tell me of the reason of your continual journeyings is delightful ; it is full of wit and grace, and here is quite a good enough example of it to pass for the truth . " I fill my youth in order that my old age may not be able to reproach me for not having used it." You can quite see it is like the miser who while he lets his children die of hunger, juſtifies his harshness to himself by saying that he is amassing goods for them to enjoy when he is dead. Let us be more

simple, let us not seek for pretexts to justify our tastes and passions: you go to the ends of the world because your mind is more greedy than tender; well, what harm is there in that? You are young, you have known love, you have suffered, and as a result you have concluded that you are full of feeling, which is not true. You are eager, you are passionate, you would be capable of anything which is strong, or great; but you will never do anything but what requires movement, that is to say, deeds, detached actions. It is not in that way that tenderness and sensibility go to work: they attach, they bind, they fill the whole of life, they leave room only for the soft and peaceful virtues, they fly from notoriety. Everything which separates and divides them from their object seems to them misfortune or tyranny. Now then, look, and compare. Ah, I have told you already, nature has not made you to be happy: she has condemned you to be great: so give in and do not complain.

I believe, besides, everything you tell me of the advantages of this country over all others; I do not know if you will bring back from your travels a distaste for travelling, but I am quite sure you will not bring back the power of being able to settle down anywhere. You will have judged justly and accurately what is good, and what is better: but you will do as the Italians do with music, they prefer the new to the good.

I ask your pardon, I contradict your words, but you must admit that I am perfctely in tune with your mind. And you want me to speak to you of mine? This, then, is its condition: have you never seen sick people who are attacked by slow and incurable diseases? When you ask the people who are nursing them for news, they answer: "things are going as well as his condition allows": that is to say, he will die, but he

has a few moments respite : that is exactly the kind of health my mind enjoys. After the most violent storm, calm has followed.

His moral disposition is as I would have it according to my wishes and my heart : but how alarming is his health. Still I am sure he is not making a mistake in treatment ; he loves life because he loves to love and to be loved, he clings to it only for that. Oh, if you only knew how lovable he is ! Yes, you would love me a little, but you would not think much of me, for having been capable of being distracted. Oh, *what* must you be, to have turned me for a moment from the most charming and perfect of all beings. Yes, if you knew him, or when you know him, you will see that in the judgment I have come to there is neither illusion nor prejudice. Well ! Is that showing you my mind clearly enough ? Is my friendship passive, active, or indiscreet ?

The chevalier d'Aguesseau will have let you know that I had lost patience ; I had sent to ask him for news of you ; at the moment, he had had none ; but as soon as he received a letter of the 8th, he sent me word that you were well, and then I was tempted to write to you to thank you for having a friend who could relieve me from anxiety ; and then I thought it was better to wait for you. Yes, indeed, it is my wish to wait for you, always. Why should I go quicker than you ? I should tire myself and put you out of your stride. I do not want my mind to be painfully distressed by any affection again : I have had too much. I know not how I can sustain the expenditure I am put to. It is true that I have concentrated all my strength on one single point : all nature is dead for me, except the object which animates and fills every moment of my life. I exist for nothing ; things, pleasures, amusement, vanity, repute, all that is of

no more interest to me, and I regret the time I gave to them, though it was very short; for I knew grief early, and there is this much good in it, it keeps one from many follies. I have been formed by that great master of mankind, *misfortune*. This is the language that pleased you: it brought you close to the tender spot in your mind from which dissipation and the friendly accents of the women of this country ceaselessly estranged you. You were obliged to me for bringing you back to what you had loved, to what you had suffered; yes, there is a kind of grief which has such a delight, which brings such balm to the mind that one is quite ready to prefer that ill to what men call *pleasure*. I taste this happiness or this poison twice a week, and that kind of nourishment is far more necessary to me than the air I breathe.

The comtesse de Boufflers has spoken much to me of you, and of the messages she was sending you; she likes you because you wrote the *Constable of Bourbon*, and certainly her taste is well-founded. For my part I should like you much better if you were not the *Constable of Bourbon*. Oh, how petty and limited is my mind! I hate equally the Patagonians and the Liliputians. But what does my taste matter to you?

You are very kind to have thought of writing larger; but yet I am inclined to complain of it, for it has deprived me of a few lines. For heaven's sake, stay as you are; scribble as illegibly as you like, go round the world—but begin with Paris—in a word don't change a hair of your composition. I don't know whether it is the best possible, but it is the most agreeable possible to me. Is not this flattery *stale*? Don't laugh at me. I am very stupid, but I assure you I am a good creature, am I not?

Letter 12

TO THE SAME

Sunday evening, 1st August, 1773.

You are too kind, you have given me a real surprise; it is delightful to have a pleasure on which one did not count, and I am charmed to owe you an emotion which does my mind good.

Yesterday I had received a letter from you dated the 18th; I was very pleased to see that the dates were close together, that you no longer left a fortnight between them, and I did not owe this change to the regret I had shown you, but to you and to your friendship: I like what it gives me far more than what I could get by asking. I wanted to thank you, to tell you feebly what I feel very deeply; and I was luckier still, I have to-day had a letter dated also the 18th. My first emotion, I don't know why, was that of fear—the habit of misfortune spoils everything—but I was soon reassured. I found you good, tender, close to my heart; it seemed to me that I ought to applaud myself for having suffered, since my grief interested you. Oh, with how many regrets you fill my life! I should enjoy your friendship, it would bring me consolation, it would be my pleasure—and you are a thousand miles away, and I cannot protect myself from the fear that so many novelties, that a life so busy and so full of distraction as that which you are forced to lead, may destroy or at least weaken a connection and an interest which have lacked perhaps the degree of warmth which makes them a necessity to one's heart, or time which makes a habit of them. I admit that I set very small value on the latter bond: it is the feeling of those who have no feelings; but see

the fatal disposition of my mind! I spend my time in fears of regret, when I ought to be enjoying the evidence and proof of your friendship. It is very sweet, very indulgent, this friendship of yours; you forgive me all my injustice: I have accused you a thousand times, but all the same I have never repented of having given myself to you by the most intimate confidences. It is impossible, with you, to have to reproach oneself for any misunderstanding, and hence, one is sheltered from great misfortunes; for notice how all tragedies are based on a misunderstanding, and almost all misfortunes have the same cause. But don't punish me for having been unjust by telling me no more of what interests you: tell me everything you feel, and I promise I will share it, and tell you in exchange the impression I receive from it.

I am too fond of you to be able to impose the least restraint upon myself; I prefer to have to ask your forgiveness, than to avoid committing faults; I have no longer any pride with you, and I do not understand all the rules of conduct which make one always pleased with oneself, and so cold towards what one loves. I detest prudence, I even detest—let me say it—*those duties of friendship* which substitute discretion for interest, delicacy and sensibility. How shall I put it? I love lack of restraint, I do what comes first into my head, and I passionately like others to be the same with me. Oh, Heavens, how far away from you I am! I have no virtues, I recognise no duties, towards my friends: I come close to the state of nature: savages do not love with more sensibility and more good faith: the world, misfortune, nothing, has been able to corrupt my heart. I shall never be on any guard against you, never suspect you. You tell me you are friendly to me; you are virtuous: then what can I fear? I shall let you see the trouble and the agitation

of my mind, and I shall not blush to seem weak and inconsistent in your eyes. I have told you before, I make no claim to please you, I do not want to usurp your esteem, I prefer to deserve your indulgence. In a word, I want to love you with all my heart, to have absolute confidence in you : and you shall do what you like with it.

No, I do not think you are *clever*, and I think as you do that cleverness is always a proof of penury ; but I do think you very *stupid*, when you do not understand what is clearly pointed out to you. But what does the name matter, it is enough that it cannot spoil what I have told you of the person. But what does astound me, is that I have told you his name twenty times ; that proves to me what I did not believe, that I utter his name like any other. But what would astound me still more would be your failing to distinguish it from the others ; still I assure you it is not made to stay among the crowd : you will see.

I have seen the chevalier d'Aguesseau to-day ; I was proud to be able to give him news of you. With the other people who have a right to expect news of you, I should have just the opposite feeling ; I should have been afraid of seeming more lucky than they, and of bringing a rebuke upon you ; for most women do not need to be loved, they only want to be preferred. The chevalier d'Aguesseau told me he was going to write to you and send you news. For my part, I am only interested in one single item, and I should indeed like to be able to send it you. I shall be very glad to see the chevalier de Chastellux again, but still if I had been able to add to the length of his journey what I should like to subtract from yours, I should not see him so soon. See, I beg of you, how I reverse the order of chronology : I have been fond of the chevalier for eight years.

I am very glad you are interested by your travels; I even want you to find pleasure in them, but what I want above all, is that you should regret the people who love you. I should like Turkey, Hungary, the Universe, not to make you forget that your absence spoils their happiness; and, too, I should like you to come back resolved not to leave them the instant they begin to enjoy the charm of your friendship and your company. Farewell, I have not told you that I am sick like an animal, but my mind is less suffering: so I ought not to complain. Cause me to have reason to praise myself for your punctuality, and you will be very kind.

Letter 13

to the same, at breslau

Sunday, 9 August, 1773

What madness is this, to go and look for you, and wait for you, at Breslau! You will be fully occupied there by the King, the troops, your successes, the *Constable*, and nothing will remind you to cast a glance towards Paris. I am wrong; Paris is very big but you would leave me among the crowd there. Still, believe me there are few, very few, and if I were not afraid of hurting you, I would say no one, who regrets you more sincerely than I. Everyone is busy or amusing themselves; I alone, I think, could never lose sight of that which distresses me or which I desire. I do not know the way to get used to privations; those which touch the mind are felt so strongly that there is no substitute for them.

I cannot believe it is not yet three months since you left, and I can still less imagine how I shall have to

wait for you till the end of November. Your presence would be bound to console me, and I regret it like a pleasure that is missed. Oh! friendship, that beneficent gift of nature, is then a fresh misfortune to me! Everything that affects my mind becomes a poison. You were so delightful an acquaintance; your accents, your manners, your wit, everything pleased me; one further degree of intimacy has spoiled everything; I gave myself up to the good you did me. Oh! why did you find your way into my mind? Why did you show me yours? Why set up an intimate relationship between two people whom everything separates? Are you, or am I to blame for the kind of pain which I suffer? Sometimes I have tried to check my longing for your return, because I fear you will distress my friendship. Still it will ask very little; you will be so busy, so full of distractions, you will hurry so eagerly from one thing to another, that even in Paris you will perhaps be farther from me than in Breslau. Think of all the merit you will have acquired in the eyes of people who give their friendship because it is the fashion and because they have nothing better to do. You will have come back from such a distance, they will be so interested in what you have seen, so delighted to see you and to listen to you, that you will find it impossible to escape from such importunity. Well, so be it; I shall hardly see you, and shall often wait for you: that is something. Besides, when one is honourable and feels things deeply, one does often come back to the place where one is always awaited. I should like things to be like that. But at least is it not your intention rather to shorten than to extend your journey? What will you see more worth seeing, more interesting, than the things you are seeing in Silesia? And then, if you did not trouble to write from Sweden, if you

wait until you have received letters, you can see that we shall be three months without hearing a word of you, and that is not absence, it is death. If you were condemned to the same privations, you would suffer less ; because it is your fault, you brought it on yourself by going away, and your friends never gave their consent to it. In a word, whether from justice or generosity, I want to have news of you, and there is no reason or excuse which can authorise you ever to go so long without writing to me, as you did between Prague and Vienna.

Consider that you *owe* much to my position. I am unhappy, I am ill, does not that incite your virtue ? Whatever your virtue bestows on me will be repaid by infinite gratitude. Heavens, how poor a motive, and how pitiable a sentiment, do you not think so ?

I have read these last few days an extract from a *Eulogy of Colbert*, which is competing for the prize offered by the French Academy. The tone of this extract seemed to me so solid, so noble, so lofty, so original, that at once I longed for it to be yours. I do not know whether the rest of the work will be worthy of it, but you would not disown the little I have seen.

I have had a fever every day lately ; the last time I wrote to you I finished my letter in a fit of shivering. There is a certain postman who for the past year has brought a fever to my mind, but now it has attacked my wretched mechanism ; I feel in a state of collapse, and I have been so unlucky that something tells me I shall die at the moment my misfortunes might come to an end. Come back, and then I shall at least be certain of having tasted, before I die, a consolation very pleasant to my mind. I blame myself for having been unjust to you. Heavens ! if you have suffered, you will have forgiven me : there are situations which demand such great indulgence.

I have read Helvétius' book, which has been so long expected; I am terrified by its hugeness, two volumes of six hundred pages each. Your *voracity* would make an end of it in two days, but I could not read with any interest; my affections claim all my attention; I have always read what I feel and not what I see. Ah, Heavens, how one's brain *contracts* when one is in love! It is true one's heart loses nothing by it, but what is the use of a heart?

I forgot to answer your question about the comte de Crillon's affair; it is rather further off than when he first thought of it. You cannot imagine what a poor creature is the man on whom this business depends; he isn't a fool, but he is the dullest of men. His wife is worth more, but her interest in herself absorbs all her faculties. Altogether, they are people whose real merit is that they have a good cook. How many people whom one praises have no higher value? No, mankind is not wicked, it is merely silly and, in Paris, as vain and frivolous as it is silly. But what does it matter, so long as the man one loves is good, kind and admirable.

Here we have no certain information as to the fate of the Turks; it is said they have been crushed by the Russians. Others declare that the Turks have beaten the Russians. Whichever side has suffered it, the loss is of slight importance; both nations are slaves, one still savage, the other half-civilised: I do not know which is worse.

Oh! *do* you know what amuses and engages the silly public? A tragedy[1] of Dorat's; it has not the least wit or talent. And as for a comedy[2] of Dorat's, *that* is a masterpiece of bad taste and bad manners, an unintelligible jargon. In a word the applause it

[1] *Regulus.* [Note by M. Asse.]
[2] *Feinte par amour.* [Note by M. Asse.]

received really saddened me the other day. It is enough to discourage talent.

Letter 14

TO THE SAME

Sunday 15 *August*, 1773.

Heavens, listen to me, and, once for all, believe that I cannot put myself in the wrong towards you; and you know very well why I cannot. So, then, I have not been negligent, for this is my fifth letter since July 3rd: the 15th, the 26th, the 1st August, the 6th or the 7th, and to-day. I do not understand why, on the 3rd, you had not received my letter of the 15th; I cannot endure the irregularities of the post; they are the torment of my life; but you astonish me when you set so much importance on them. How then can your mind be strong enough to endure everything? I only do one thing, and it makes me die of fatigue and pain.

Your quotation of the regrets of this father, etc., etc., à propos of my letters, is delightful. Is it by wit that one penetrates so deeply into a sensitive mind? No, your wit would amuse you, but it would not move me. How can you think I had set myself to disturb you? Good heavens, where should I have found grounds for such silly confidence? Did I want to punish you? And for what? Supposing, which is certainly not the case, that I was dissatisfied with your friendship, should I have any right to complain, and wouldn't it be the height of impertinence to let myself imagine that you would feel the loss of my letters? If I tell you that I am not so idiotically vain

as most women, you will not be bound to believe me ; but when you know me better, you will realise that I accept thankfully everything that people are good enough to allow me ; that I enjoy it with deep feeling ; that I respond to it with all the tenderness and sincerity of my mind ; but I never feel animated with that kind of confidence which springs not from the heart, but from vanity, which makes demands on the man one loves, and sometimes dares to put him to the proof. Knowledge of the world has not changed the simplicity and truth of my feelings. Notice, please, that I am not praising, but defending, myself.

I am vexed and disturbed by the pain in your leg ; you will not take care of it, whatever you may say, and that is what disturbs me, even more than your pain. Heavens, how right you are ! There is nothing so cold and so trivial as to humour one's friends. Alas, the great misfortune of absence is that one never knows all the details which affect them : however much one says, one still leaves so much to be desired ! I think my friend always leaves out what I need to know. But why wear yourself out with fatigue ? Lack of sleep exhausts the brain, and, however strong yours may be, I am certain that after a sleepless night you get less profit from the things and the objects you want to observe : without taking into account the risk of weakening your health. To attain the mark which you have set yourself, you must not only live, but be well. If one exalts one's mind to the point of sacrificing everything for the love of glory, I think it is as well to look after one's digestion. Oh, if you only knew how physical suffering enfeebles the mind, I answer for it that you would not be so wasteful of your sleep and your strength. The language I am using is very trivial, I know, but it is the language of friendship. The accents of interest lack grace, are

ponderous, repeat themselves; that is not tiresome when one is interested in someone who deserves it so well.

Indeed, it would be easy for me to believe that the disturbed state of your mind when you wrote unhinged your judgment: you urge me to write, but do not say where I am to address my letter. I know that you left Vienna on the 12th at latest, and still I write to you there: there's no sense in it. There was equally little sense, I think, in having written to you at Breslau; but why then, when you go round the world, retain the need to hear from your friends? Oh, yes, you are very inconsistent! Truly, there are times when I feel so weary, that I am quite ready to leave you to your travels. I am so ill, so unhappy, that it seems it would be a service to you to let myself be altogether forgotten. The kinder you are, the more deeply you feel, the more I dare to assure you that you will often repent of having given yourself up so quickly to a connection of which all the advantage was bound to be on my side.

There is one paragraph in your letter on which my eyes could not rest, yet my mind seemed to cling to it. Heavens, what a word you utter! My blood freezes. No, no, my mind would not still seek yours.

Oh, the thought of it makes me die! Be my consolation, calm, if it is possible, the trouble of my mind, but beware of thinking that I could for one moment survive a misfortune the mere fear of which fills my life with a terror which has ruined my health, and unceasingly disturbs my reason. Farewell, I cannot go on, I feel suffocated; if I have been able to find distraction, I will begin again, for I have to justify myself and to ask your pardon, though I am not guilty.

Still Sunday.

I HAVE been tempted to warn you that I repeated that sentence about the King of Prussia, which was charming, and I thought I could tell it again without any harm. People thought it what it is, and it was repeated so often that it reached the ears of Mme du Deffand, who thought it thoroughly bad, altered it, made comments on it, and had a thousand objections to make to it. In a word, she ended by saying that even if you had written *Athalie* as well as the *Constable of Bourbon*, that would not prevent her from thinking both the substance and the form of that thought detestable. Some days afterwards, she spoke to the ambassador[1] in the same tone ; this annoyed him, and he told her that if one wanted to criticise, one ought, at any rate, to quote accurately, and that, even allowing for the changes she made in the terms of the phrase, he still thought her criticism as severe as it was unjust.

Madame de Luxembourg and madame de Beauvau, in whose presence this occurred, and who were against madame du Deffand, asked the ambassador if he could obtain a copy of the sentence. He promised to do so. He came to me to tell me of this silly quarrel, and I confess that the pleasure of confounding madame du Deffand caused me to yield to the ambassador's entreaties ; I had those three lines copied for him, and he went off in triumph. So madame du Deffand was confounded, or at any rate she no longer dared to disparage that which everyone found charming. Till then, there had been no question of knowing to whom you had written it : she thought of asking, the ambassador refused to say ; this only made her more curious, and at last he told her it was me, and added :

[1] The marquis de Caraccioli, Neapolitan ambassador. [V.-G.]

"It must have been a presentiment which made you disparage something full of wit and grace." This is a long story; I should have told it you at the time, but it seemed pitiable when transported four hundred miles. I must add that the ambassador brought me back the copy and it was burned. And now see what a void all this proves! Yes, misfortune is good for something; it corrects all the petty passions which agitate these lazy and corrupted people. Oh, if they could love, they would become good. Judge, after this, whether I am capable of indiscretion, and if you say I am, I will believe it; but don't tell me people will believe that "we write to each other to exchange witticisms, etc., etc." What does it matter to us what fools and ill-natured people think? They are only strong because they are feared; I detest them, I fly from them, but do not fear them.

For some years I have so carefully weighed those who pass judgment, that I should not dare to tell you how much I despise them. I should not be ready to brave them, but that is all. There is a passion which closes the mind to all the miseries which torment worldly people, and I am wretched enough to experience it. A great grief kills everything else. There is for me only one interest, one misfortune, one judge, in all nature. Oh, no I am not small-minded. Consider that I only hold on to life by a single thread; if it failed me, I should die. In a disposition so intimate, deep and permanent, you can easily believe that everything else is annihilated for me. I do not know what fatality, what good fortune has made me susceptible to a new affection; when I look into myself, I can find no excuse or explanation; but whatever it may be, its effect is to bring some sweetness into my life. It seems incredible that my misfortunes have had the power to interest you; that proves to me the goodness,

the sensibility of your heart. Now I blame myself for the remorse which I had for having let myself follow my inclination towards you : misfortune makes one severe with oneself. I thought myself to be blamed for the good you did me. Is it now, or was it then, that I was under an illusion ? Truly, I have no idea. But you, whose mind is not overwhelmed by misery, will judge me better, and when I see you you will tell me whether I must praise myself or be distressed because of the feeling you inspire in me.

Yesterday I received news which alarms me : his health seems incapable of improvement ; he is always threatened by a mortal accident, which has brought him to death's door twice in the last year. How can I live ! Farewell, let me have your news.

Letter 15

to the same

Monday, 16 *August*, 1773.

I open my letter again to tell you how deeply I am touched by your kindness in being so disturbed at not having news of me. I cannot imagine the reason, for the people I asked to take my letters to the general post-office were friends of mine. M. d'Alembert received your letter of the 6th yesterday, I undertook to answer you, and I shall never tell you how vexed and how very *pleased* I am to have caused you worry. If I was wrong, I should be seriously grieved. But why have you given up your visit to the north ? I cannot believe that it is only to shorten the time of your journey ; for whom, then, are you sacrificing Sweden ? If the sacrifice has been demanded of you you are pleased : that person's desire has already

repaid you. In any case, if your return is hastened, I love the person or the thing which is the cause of it; but next year you will still have to go to Russia; and then will you not be bound to go at once to Montauban? And then the country, and then her with whom you find pleasure, and with whom you will seek happiness, and then . . . but it does not matter, all that is better than Sweden; and something, I do not know what, tells me that I must not worry about what will happen next year; as you said, before then we have time to die so often. But why did you not tell me that you were shortening your journey? I should have known it a day sooner. You have reproached me; I want to do as much to you; is it you who were to blame for what the chevalier de Chastellux tells me? He declares that I am very fond of you. How does he know it? I have told my secret to no one but you and him to whom I tell everything. Can you have written to him? If so, I should have to thank you and pity myself.

M. d'Alembert is at the moment with madame de Geoffrin, and so I have no doubt she is giving herself the pleasure of writing to the King of Poland. Do you realise that to praise and love you might delight one's vanity? But please do not for a moment imagine that that was the emotion which drew me to you. Oh, how *frail* it would be! I hope that before you leave Vienna you will have been so overwhelmed with my letters as to be heartily tired of them. Do not forget that you must acknowledge the receipt of five, including this. You would be very kind if you answered all my questions, but time fails you, and perhaps confidence too; but I who lack neither generosity nor *indulgence*, will forgive you everything if you come; when? Soon. Come back, then you may go and enjoy with the chevalier de

Chaſtellux the delights of the chase at La Brétenêche. That isn't exactly the word, but near enough; you won't misunderſtand it; the Chevalier could never teach me the name.[1] But it seems that in this *volume* I have left out one curious chapter: my health. It is abominable; I cough myself to death, and with such force as to spit blood. I spend part of my life deprived of the power of speech; my voice is ſtrangled, and, of all inconveniences, that is the one which beſt suits the disposition of my mind; I love silence, meditation, retreat. I do not sleep at all, or hardly at all, and I am never bored. Are you not going to think that I am happy? If I added that I would not change places with anyone in the world, you would think me in paradise; you would be wrong; to go there, one muſt be dead, and that is what I should like to be; but come to me, and write me long, long letters.

Letter 16

TO THE SAME, AT BRESLAU

22 *Auguſt*, 1773.

I had your letter of the 10th yeſterday. It has done me good. If you only knew how I have suffered in the laſt week, how my heart has been wrung by pain! In what anxiety, in what terror my life is worn away! I am no longer at liberty to deliver myself from it, and that is dreadful to me: and it is not in the power of him I love to put an end to my woes. He feels them, suffers because of them, he is even more unhappy than I, for his mind is ſtronger, and more energetic and sensitive than mine. For a year, every

[1] La Bretèche, madame de Montsauge's home. [V.-G.]

moment of his life has been marked by pain, he will die of it, and he wishes me to live. Oh, Heavens, my mind cannot endure all that it feels and suffers. But see how weak I am, how indiscreet and personal grief makes me! I make you think about me, perhaps I sadden you. Oh, forgive me, this excessive confidence comes of my friendship, my tender friendship, for you. You have already shown me such goodness and such indulgence that it seems I cannot any more abuse it. Alas, if you are suffering, who would feel it more and share it better than I? You see into my mind, you see what it feels for you. Oh, I feel it, in the very depths of misery, though I invoked death at every moment, you would cost me a regret; you console me and yet I sink beneath the weight of my misfortunes. Oh, no, it is not my own that rend my heart, but those of my friend for which I can find no remedy, no consolation: that is torture to a sensitive and devoted mind: you have loved, you will understand and pity me.

But see how greedily one clutches at anything that makes one hope for some relief: from what you told M. d'Alembert, I counted on seeing you at the end of September, and you will not be here till the end of October. But, at least, will you be here then? Alas, I do not know if I can allow myself to hope so long as that. I am speaking to you perhaps for the last time. Can you imagine the terror that fills me? I dare not allow myself any plans, nor any hope. Ah, I had suffered much from the injustice and the malice of men; I had been reduced to despair by them; but, I must admit, there is no misery that can be compared with that of a deep and unlucky passion: it has wiped out ten years of torture. My life seems to date only from my love; everything that affected me, everything that had made me unhappy till then, is

annihilated ; and yet, in the eyes of calm and reasonable people, I should have no misfortunes but those which I no longer feel ; they call passion an artificial misfortune. Alas, it is because they love nothing, because they live only for vanity and ambition ; while I henceforward live only for love. I am no longer in tune with society, its interests are no longer mine ; far more than that : I should be incapable of fulfilling any duty ; I have no virtues, but luckily I am free and independent, and when I give myself entirely to my disposition, I have no regrets, because I am failing no one. But how little you must think of me ! I often blame myself for the kindness and esteem that are shown to me : I am a great usurper in society, people judge me too favourably, because they do not know me. It is true, too, that I have been so much the victim of the calumny and malice of my enemies, that what I now experience is a kind of compensation.

I have been interrupted by the arrival of the chevalier de Chastellux who entered my room without being announced, and I thought he was at Ferney. I told him I was very glad to see him back, but my heart was not in my words. He did not lighten my grief for a moment, I only felt that he was preventing me from writing to you : yet he is what one calls a friend. Indeed, I am interested in him, but he can do nothing to give me pleasure. But, Heavens, perhaps my mind is for ever closed to that sensation ; if it be so, what am I to do with life ? I leave it to you to put it to the test ; come, but it frightens me, Ah, if my mind were to be for ever cold, I should be distracted ; and would you feel it ? Would you have goodness enough to regret my pleasure ? But no doubt, at the moment I see you, you will still be wholly occupied with what you will have felt on seeing once more the object of your love. Admit that that

day you will be farther from me than you are at Breslau. Heavens, it is quite fair; provided that when you are calm you come back to me, I shall be too happy. I am not only pleased, but deeply moved by that which you grant me; I do not even know if I respond to it: what do you think? Which of us is in arrears? Judging by our positions, I think the advantage should be with me. Misfortune disposes one to friendship and tenderness far more than the life you are leading. Besides, everything else being equal, are not you a thousand times more amiable and worthy to be loved than I am? But then, there are days, and moments, when my mind is so absorbed that I fear I do not love you enough. Let me make you one reproach: your confidence fails my friendship, you no longer tell me anything about yourself. Why? I have been unjust once, I know; do you want to punish me for it? You suffer, you hope, you enjoy; why do you not tell me of these things? You tell me so little of yourself that your letters might almost be sent to all the women you know. It is not the same with mine: they can have only one address. Consider whether I am wrong: is equality in confidence too much to ask?

This is the fourth letter of which you have to acknowledge the receipt: do not forget. I think it is madness to have written to you at Breslau; you will not have had a thought for the post there, and my letter will have lain unclaimed. But, at least, do you burn mine? I can see them from here falling from the enormous packets you take out of your pockets; the disorder of your papers disturbs my confidence: but you see that it does not check it. Farewell, I have a pain in my chest. Is your leg healed? Send me your news.

Letter 17

TO THE SAME

Monday, 6 September, 1773.

Your silence gives me pain. I do not accuse you, but I am suffering and I find it hard to persuade myself that if your interest was as vivid as that which animates me, a whole month would pass without my hearing a word from you. But, good heavens, tell me, what value do you set on friendship, if a change of place separates you entirely from it? Ah, how lucky you are! A king, an emperor, armies, camps, make you forget her who loves you, and, what perhaps touches a sensitive mind more nearly, those whom your friendship sustains and consoles. No, I am not trying to put you in the wrong, and I should even like your forgetfulness not to seem a wrong; I should like to find in myself the disposition which makes one approve, or endure, everything without complaint. This is the fifth letter unanswered; I ask you how many people there are to whom you would make such advances? I do not know why I was certain that I should have news of you at Breslau, whether you received the letter I addressed to you there, or whether it was lost; but my hopes have been deceived. Oh! I hate you for making me know hope, fear, pain, pleasure; I have no need of all this emotion; why did you not leave me in peace? My mind had no need of love: it was full of a tender, a deep feeling which was shared and reciprocated, but yet was painful, and it was this emotion which brought me close to you; you had only to please me, and you touched me; by comforting me, you attached me to you; the strange thing is that the good you have done me,

that I accepted without consenting to receive it, far from making me easy to get on with and pliant, as people are who receive a benefit, seems on the contrary to have given me the right to expect much from, perhaps to make demands upon, your friendship. Do you who look at things from a lofty standpoint, and who see deeply, explain to me whether this is the emotion of an ungrateful mind, or perhaps of a too sensitive one; I will believe what you tell me.

If I wished, or rather if I was not anxious and displeased at your silence, I should make a complaint against you, which you would understand perfectly, which you would answer with enjoyment, and your justification would no doubt be a fresh crime; but you who are so far away, in so much of a hurry, so busy, and worse than that, so *intoxicated*, That word avenges me, but does not content me. So come back; I see the time pass with a pleasure I cannot express. They say that what is past is nothing; but it overwhelms me; it is precisely because I have suffered much that it is dreadful to me to suffer again. But, Heavens, it is madness to promise myself any calm, any consolation, from your friendship; you have amassed so many new ideas, your mind has been agitated by so many diverse emotions, that no trace will be left on it of the impression made on you by my unhappiness and my confidence.

Ah, well, come all the same, I will be the judge, and I shall see clearly, for illusions are not made for the unhappy. Besides, you are as frank as I am true, we shall not deceive ourselves for a moment; so come, and do not bring back from your journey the same impressions as the Chevalier brought from Italy. He speaks without any pleasure of all that he has seen, and gets no more from all he sees; in a word, I would not

change my disposition for his, even though I spend my life in convulsions of fear and pain; but on the other hand, what I wait for, what I desire, what I obtain, what is given me, is so precious to my mind! I live, I exist so vigorously, that there are times when I catch myself loving to distraction my very unhappiness! Must I not indeed cling to it, must it not be dear to me? it is the cause of my knowing you, of my loving you; through it perhaps I have a friend the more, for you tell me so: if I had been calm, reasonable, cold, none of this would have happened. I should vegetate like all the women who play with their fans while they talk of the verdict in M. de Morangiès' case and of the entry into Paris of madame la comtesse de Provence. Yes, I repeat it, I prefer my misery to everything that worldly people call happiness or pleasure; I shall die of it perhaps, but that is better than never to have lived. Do you understand me? Are you of my mind? Can you have forgotten that you have been as ill as I and more happy? Farewell, I do not know how it happens, I meant to write only four lines, but my pleasure has led me on. How many people are there whom you will be more pleased to see again than me? I will give you a list of them: madame de M . . ., the chevalier d'Aguesseau, MM. de Broglie, de Beauvau, de Rochambeau, de Pezé, etc., etc.; mesdames de Beauvau, de Boufflers, de Rochambeau, de Martinville, etc., etc.; and then the chevalier, the comte de Crillon, and then myself at the very end. Ah, well, see the difference: I could only count one against your twelve; but the heart does not follow the dictates of justice, it is a despot, and absolute. I forgive you, but come back.

Letter 18

to the same, at vienna

Thursday, 23 September, 1773.

After I have waited more than a month for news of you, you tell me you have been very ill, and you imagine you reassure your friend by saying that there is no need to worry, because the fever had left you the day before! Seriously, do you think that that assurance is enough to calm my mind? Alas, I see it only too clearly, you treat me just as people of the world treat each other, who call themselves friends and feel nothing; they are only disturbed by and busied about their own interests, or their silly vanity. But, good heavens, I do not criticise them, I am distressed by your sufferings and my own fears. If you only knew how painfully you have filled my mind this last month! But I do not want to speak to you about that, but about your health and your return. In friendship's name, do nothing rash; sleep, rest, and in trying to come sooner do not run the risk of never coming at all. Will you at least have taken the trouble to send me news before leaving Breslau? You will be overwhelmed by my letters when you reach Vienna; do not forget to acknowledge them. I have good reason to ask, for this is the fifth you have to tell me of. It was not my letter you sent for to the post at Breslau; see how kind and generous I am: I should have liked it to be metamorphosed into the one for which you were waiting and of which your mind had need. I do not know why it is, but you are the one man in the world whom I have least desire to please, whom I least want to enchant with what you call my *attentions*. It is because

I do not want your gratitude; it is a sentiment I detest.

I should like to be mistaken, but from the tone of your letter I see that you are very weak, very pale, and exhausted. I die of fear lest, while in that disposition, you did not think of writing to me; if it be so, you will be much to blame. Be obliged to me for not reproaching you to-day; I could, however, justly overwhelm you with reproaches. Even if you were to think me as ridiculous as I am tiresomely insistent, I will again repeat that I *desire* you to burn my letters; if you failed to do so, it would cause you remorse. I am delighted that you have enjoyed your journey: M. d'Alembert has had no news of the King since his return from Silesia. I much regret, too, that he did not hear the *Constable*; still if you have talked with him, he has made his acquaintance in as interesting a way as if he had seen him in action in your play. Farewell, I must stop; if I spoke of you, I should have too many things to say, and if I spoke of myself, the subject would be too gloomy for a convalescent.

M. d'Alembert and the comte de Crillon send their best love: they await you impatiently. The chevalier de Chastellux is absorbed in the comedies of La Chevrette, but his accents are cold and sad. Farewell, do you really think that I shall see you again in a month? It is too far away for me to feel any pleasure in the prospect.

You will have heard that MM. Favier, Guliberg, Ségur and Dumouriez have been arrested and sent to the Bastille. No one knows for certain what is at the bottom of this plot. A commission has been appointed to try them; it is composed of only three people, MM. de Sartine, de Marvelle, and de Belveau. I can tell you nothing about this business, which is

assuredly as completely indifferent to you as to me. But you have friends who are ambitious; such a connection ought to bring no pleasure to a mind like yours, but your mind is still very young and your activity is appalling. Good-bye, you could well have done without this comment, which will seem to you to spring from a very petty and ordinary mind; and you will be wrong. It is not enough to write to me from Vienna, I want also to have news of you on the road, which you could not traverse too slowly for your health's sake. Take as your motto *prudence* and *patience*; I beg you, I *command* you; yes, that is only fair.

Letter 19

to the same, at paris

Friday evening (November) 1773.

Here I am; my courage has failed me. When I have not got what I love, I love only to be alone; then I talk to my friends more intimately and more freely. I have been writing for three hours, and I am blinded by it, but not bored. Madame de Boufflers has allowed me to ask you for a copy of her letter: bring it me to-morrow; bring me that delightful *story*, bring me the continuation of your journey which gives me infinite pleasure. Is it in the morning, or the evening that I am to see you? I should like the morning because it is sooner, and the evening because it is farther off; in a word, I should like whatever you are willing to grant me. Good-night; I could not sleep last night.

Letter 20

TO THE SAME

Sunday, 3.30.

My friend, I shall not see you, and you will say that it is not your fault; but if you had wanted to see me a thousandth part as much as I wanted to see you, you would be there, and I should be happy; no, I am wrong, I should be suffering, but I should not envy the joys of heaven. My friend, I love you as one must love, excessively, madly, with transport, with despair. All these last few days, you have put my mind to torture; I saw you this morning, and forgot everything, and it seemed to me that I was not doing enough for you by loving you with all my soul, by being ready to live or to die for you. You are worth more than that. Yes, if I knew only how to love you, that would be nothing, indeed; for is there anything pleasanter or more natural than to love what is perfectly lovable? But, my friend, I do more than love, I know how to suffer; I should be capable of giving up my pleasure for the sake of your happiness. But here is someone coming to disturb the pleasure I have in proving to you that I love you.

Do you know why I am writing to you? It is because it does me good. You would never have suspected it, if I had not told you. But, Heavens, where are you? If you are enjoying yourself, I must no more complain that you are depriving me of enjoyment.

My friend, tell me what you are going to do, and what you have been doing.

MME. GEOFFRIN

[face p. 97

Letter 21

TO THE SAME

Wednesday.

Good-morning, my friend. Have you slept well? How are you? Shall I see you? Oh, do not take anything away from me, time is so short, and I set such value on all the time that I spend in seeing you. My friend, I no longer have opium in my head and in my blood; I have worse than that; I have that which would make one give thanks to heaven and cleave to life, if the man one loved was filled with the same emotion. But, Heavens, the man one loves is precisely made to be the torment and despair of a sensitive mind.

Good-bye, I want to see you; you ought to have come to dine with me at madame Geoffrin's; I did not dare to tell you so yesterday evening.

Yes, you ought to love me to distraction; I demand nothing, I forgive everything, and I am never for a moment out of temper; my friend, I am perfect, for I love you perfectly.

Letter 22

TO THE SAME

Sunday, 4 o'clock.

You have not left, at least I hope not. This is what you will have said to yourself: "It is abominable weather; I will go to the country to-morrow; I shall be taken there, I shall *see her* after dinner; I shall spend the evening with madame de Villenon.'

My friend, if that has been your line of reasoning, M. d'Alembert will leave reasoning to you in the future, and you will not be *reduced* to writing, and only writing *Conſtables*. Racine would not have liked to have been prevented from writing his *Letters* on the myſtics, or even his *Hiſtory of Port Royal*. Here are the two volumes: if you lose them, I warn you *you* will be loſt in the opinion of M. d'Alembert. Here is the Plutarch too: it is mine, but if it is all the same to you, I would juſt as soon it was not torn or loſt.

I saw madame de M . . . at Mass; I wanted to speak to her; I wished to form an opinion on one who has been something to you. Her face and figure would juſtify the taſte of the moſt faſtidious and the hardeſt to please: but her tone, her taſte, her deportment, oh, how disguſting they are! Am I wrong, my friend? But her mind does not resemble her body. Ah, I can believe it, I even hope so: is that generous of me?

No, you will never know everything the ambassador tells me; but liſten only to this: he says that to judge by appearances M. de Guibert has won what M. de M . . . and he would like to win; and then adds: "I am not afraid of this letter being read by your eyes, keen as they are; I give my leave for it to be read by M. de Guibert's eyes, as he reads in your mind, etc., etc.," and then he adds a hundred more jeſts full of wit and gaiety. He is assuredly a dear, but he very little deserves to be loved.

My friend, you advised me yeſterday evening not to love you: was it me, or yourself, whom you wanted to free from that misfortune? Tell me. I have an infallible remedy: how pleasant it will be to me, if I can think I am doing something for you. My friend, this mind of mine, which is so like a thermometer, firſt

at freezing-point, then temperate, and a little after at the burning heat of the equator, this mind of mine so carried away by an irresistible force, finds it very hard to moderate and calm itself. It desires you, it fears you, it loves you, it has lost its bearings, but always it devotes itself to you and to its regrets.

Letter 23

TO THE SAME

Friday, 2 o'clock.

My friend, when I came in yesterday evening at midnight, I found your letter; I was not expecting such good fortune; but I am distressed by the quantity of days that pass without my seeing you. Heavens, if you knew what days are, what life is, when stripped of the interest and pleasure of seeing you. My friend, distraction, occupation, movement, are enough for you, while my happiness is in you and only in you; I should no longer wish to live, if I was not to see you and love you every moment of my life.

Tell me your news, and come to dinner to-morrow at the comte de Crillon's. He asked me to change the day from Sunday to Saturday; I said I would, but do come, I beg of you.

I was to dine with the Spanish ambassador[1] to-day: I sent my excuses; if you were to have been there, I should not have refused. Good-bye, I await the letter you promised me. In great haste.

[1] The comte d'Aranda. [Note by the comte de Villeneuve-Guibert.]

Letter 24

TO THE SAME[1]

Sunday evening, January, 1774.

Here is the book[2] at last; I only give it you on condition that you give it to madame de M . . .; though her daughter is not so young as *Emilie*, it will be useful to her. There are many be-feathered ladies who need to read it, but they would not profit by it. All that is good will always be like their feathers, far above their heads. Remember, if you want to go to the rehearsal on Tuesday, that we shall be at your door at 10.45, and shall not wait five minutes. Do not come out of good nature, we should not feel the value of it. Good-night.

Letter 25

TO THE SAME

Thursday 21st.

I yield to the needs of my heart, my friend; I love you, I feel as much pleasure and as much anguish as if this were the first and last time in my life that I utter those words. Ah, why did you condemn me to it! Why am I reduced to it! You will know some day, alas, you will understand me. . . .

It is dreadful to me to be no longer free to suffer for you and through you. Is that to love you enough? Farewell, my friend.

[1] Unpublished. [V-G.]

[2] *Conversations d'Emilie*, by madame d'Epinay, first published in 1774.

Letter 26

TO THE SAME

At every moment of my life.

My dear, I suffer, I love you, I wait for you.

Letter 27

TO THE SAME

Tuesday evening.

My friend, you make me feel that one prefers to give rather than to pay one's debts. I have here several letters to answer, and, to get to them, I must begin by talking to you. My friend, have you given me a minute, two minutes, since yesterday evening? Have you said to yourself: she is suffering, she loves me and I am to blame for a part of her ills? It is not in order to cause yourself distress or remorse that you must say this; but so that you may be kind, indulgent, and not be angry when pain sometimes lets slip a cry. For my part, I have thought of you, thought much of you; my thoughts have occupied me so deeply, so very deeply, that I can now understand how the devout can enjoy, undistracted, the presence of God. But, my friend, you are more many-sided than God. When I have looked on you and seen you endowed with every perfection as He is, there is also the reverse of the medal, and by insensible degrees I run down the scale from *God* to *Lucifer*, and your faults are so vast, so infinite, that they fill to the brim the immense gulf between.

Ah, Heavens, was there ever such pride, such vanity, such disdain, such scorn, such injustice, such self-satisfaction, in a word, the collection and assortment of all the population of Hell and the bagnios for a thousand years? All this was in my room yesterday evening, and the walls and ceilings did not collapse! It is miraculous. Surrounded by all the dunces and pedants, the fools and the dry-as-dusts, all those detestable people with whom I spent my day, I thought only of you and your follies, I missed you, I wanted you as passionately as if you had been the most amiable and reasonable of creatures. I cannot explain the charm which binds me to you. You are not my friend, you cannot become my friend. I have no sort of confidence about you, or in you. You have caused me the deepest and bitterest pangs that can distress and lacerate an honourable mind; you deprive me, perhaps for ever, at this moment, of the only consolation which Heaven granted to the days I have still to live. In a word, what shall I say? You have filled everything, the past, the present and the future offer me only pain, regret, remorse. Well, my friend, I ponder, I judge all this, and I am drawn towards you by an attraction, an emotion, which I detest, but which has all the power of a curse and a fatality. You do well not to reckon up your debt to me: I have no right to demand anything from you, for my most ardent desire is that you should do nothing for me.

What would you say of the disposition of a wretched creature who showed herself to you for the first time, agitated, overwhelmed, by feelings so diverse, so contradictory? You would pity her, your kind heart would be roused, you would want to help, to comfort her distress. Well, my friend, *I* am she, and this misery, *you* are the cause of it: and this heart so

full of fire, so full of pain, is your doing. Ah, I think you are still like God, you must indeed repent of your work.

Truly, when I took up my pen, I did not know a word of what I should say to you : I wanted only to tell you to come and dine to-morrow, Wednesday, at Mme Geoffrin's. I wanted to make you realise that you alone of all my friends have the constancy to refuse me, and make me wait for, what I eagerly desire, the *Constable*. It is mine, I might refuse it to you, and here I am persecuting you to give it back to me. Oh, heavens, neither care, nor interest, nor attention, nor desire to please, sometimes kindness which resembles pity . . . and yet, *with all that*, or *without it*, I love you to distraction. Pity me and do not tell me so. Bring me back my letter.

Yes.

Letter 28

TO THE SAME

12.30 *a.m.*

I am only just this moment alone ; and I want to tell you very quickly that I am not counting on you to go to madame d'Anville's. You will always be agreable, but seldom useful, to me, and I would I could add that you are by no means necessary to me. When you try to reassure my confidence in you, you prove to me how justly founded is my distrust, for I still lack three letters, and one in particular, in which I spoke about *Gonzalez*. You will find that these three letters are still in one of the pockets of your case ; or perhaps they are with the fourth volume which I was to receive yesterday. I notice that you take pleasure in showing

all the attention you can to Mme de M . . .; you give, or lend to her everything that gives you pleasure; while with me, you go to the opposite extreme: forgetfulness, neglect, refusal. Three months ago you promised me a book of yours, and I borrowed it from someone else. No doubt it is far better that such disobliging treatment should be meted out to me; that is only just, but then I am only complaining of its excessiveness. Good-night. If your work costs you your night's sleep, you must deeply regret the useless visits which have filled your time. Among the letters which you have returned, there is one which is not mine; but I swear never to give it back to you.

Letter 29

to the same

Wednesday evening.

It shall not be betrayed! It is I who am waiting for it, who asked for it! You never even thought of it. Send me back two old letters: it is not those of Cicero or Pliny for which I am asking. I should be very glad not to see you, never to see you again. Is not regret better than remorse?

At the moment you read this, I wager that you have already had a note in which you are told:

> I regret the transports of my heart for thee,
> Thy happiness will always need M. . .

Oh, Heavens, believe her, give her back her peace, and if it is possible, be happy. Such is the wish, the longing, the prayer of the unhappy creature who sees ever before her eyes the awful inscription over the gate of Hell:

> All hope abandon, ye who enter here.

No, I can stand no more, I want nothing more, I should have been annihilated on the day when I was to remain alone. Alas! you drive me from the straight path, and you have no power to console me.

Letter 30

TO THE SAME

Wednesday, 11 *May*, 1774.

You do not yet know me; it is almost impossible to wound my conceit; and one's heart is so indulgent! Indeed, yesterday evening was very like those insipid novels which make both author and reader yawn. But we must say what the King of Prussia said on a rather more memorable occasion: Another time we will do better.

An epoch-making event either pleases or annoys one; and now you will never forget that on the day of Louis XV's death[1] you spent the evening in profound slumber. Believe me, there are more painful memories than that. Good-bye.

Letter 31

TO THE SAME

11.0 *p.m. Thursday*, 12 *May*, 1774.

I WAGER you are not so drowsy to-day as you were yesterday at this hour; and the reason is very simple; you are amused, interested, and desirous to please. My friend, you were not made for intimacy; you need

[1] 10 May, 1774. [Note by the comte de Villeneuve-Guibert.]

a wide field of action; the movement and stir of society are necessary to you. It is not your vanity that needs it, but your activity. Confidence, tenderness, forgetfulness of oneself and of all self-pride, all the good things which are felt and appreciated by a tender and passionate mind, dim and dull your faculties. Yes, I repeat it, you do not need love.

God, what a strange error! And I dare to accuse certain people of lacking discernment! I dare to say that they observe nothing, that they do not understand men! Oh! how have I been so utterly led astray and deceived? How was it that my intelligence did not check the impulse of my heart? And how is it that while I never cease to condemn you, I am always attracted to you? You do not know half the power you have over me; you do not realise what you have to conquer every time I see you; you do not suspect all the sacrifices I make for you; you do not know to what an extent I renounce myself in order to be yours; I might say to you, with *Phaedra*:

Often and often I had to stifle my tears.

Yes, my friend, when I am with you I stifle all my dearest feelings. I am not speaking of my regrets, or of my memories; and, what is still more cruel to me, I only let you see a small part of the sensibility with which you fill my heart, and I keep down the passion which you rouse in my mind. I say to myself unceasingly; "He would not respond to it, he would not understand it, and I should die of grief."

Can you imagine, my friend, the kind of torture to which I am delivered. I feel remorse for what I give you, and regret for what I am compelled to restrain. I abandon myself to you, and I do not give free rein to my passion. While I yield to you, I still struggle. Oh! will you understand me? And will you realise

at least in thought what I feel and what you make me suffer. Yes, you will come back to me, because you have that momentary sensibility which makes one take interest in the unhappy and pity them. But I do not know why I allow myself this moment of expansion. I know too that I shall find no consolation in your heart, my friend; it is void of tenderness and sentiment. You have only one means of taking me out of my woes, by *intoxicating* me: and the remedy itself is the greatest of my misfortunes.

Good-night, my friend; give me your news: my footman has orders to go back for your answer. Tell me what you intend to do to-morrow, Friday; tell me whether I shall see you. I should rather it was not in the morning, because I am to have a tiresome visitor who will stay a long time; still I should like to see you. Consider that on Saturday and Sunday I shall be deprived of that happiness. Farewell again; I am tired. I have seen, I think, forty people to-day, and I only wanted one: and his thoughts assuredly did not once turn towards me.

My friend, if you were happy, I should approve your way of living, but this indefiniteness, this emptiness, this agitation, this everlasting movement, this life which is neither occupied by work nor animated by feeling, this constant expenditure which impoverishes but brings with it neither pleasure, nor interest, nor reputation! Heavens, you did not deserve that nature should be so kind to you; she has been prodigal of her gifts to you, and you are merely a spendthrift! But I ruin myself for you, and only overwhelm you and do not enrich you. I bore you; my letters are distasteful to you, and in that I admire the justice and delicacy of your tact; but if I esteem your good taste, I am distressed by your lack of indulgence and kindness.

You dined with thirty people. M. de Vaines spent the evening with me; will you believe that I did not mention your name?

Letter 32

TO THE SAME

Monday, 3 o'clock.

I did not answer you myself. If you love me, that will have distressed you, and I should be wretched if I had caused you avoidable pain. I was in a state of anguish which resembled the pains of death, and was preceded by a storm of tears which had lasted four hours. No, never, never, has my mind felt such despair.[1] I feel a kind of terror and horror which unhinges my reason. I wait for Wednesday, and it seems that death itself is not remedy enough for the loss I fear. I feel it only too deeply: one does not need courage to die, but it is horrible to live.

It is more than I can bear that perhaps the man I love, who loved me, will never again hear my voice, will never again come to my help. He will have looked on death with horror, because the thought of me was bound up with it; he told me on the 10th: "I have within me that which will make you forget all the suffering I have caused you"; and that very day, the mortal stroke fell on him.

Ah! Heavens, you who have known passion, you whose mind has been ravaged by despair, can you imagine the full extent of my misery? Pity me as long as I live, but take care never to regret the most wretched creature in the world, who will have existed

[1] M. de Mora was dying at Bordeaux. [Note by the comte de Villeneuve-Guibert.]

for a whole week in a state of grief which thought cannot conceive. Farewell, if I must live, if my sentence is not yet pronounced, I should still find sweetness, charm and consolation in your friendship. Will you keep it for me ?

Letter 33

TO THE SAME

Monday, 4.0 *p.m.*

Assuredly, my friend, I am not observing the law of retaliation at this moment, for you are not thinking of me. Ah ! Heavens, how could you think of me, surrounded as you are by so many delightful distractions, when I cannot even fix your thoughts when you are alone with me ? Do you know why I prefer to see you in the evening rather than at any other time in the day ? It is because the lateness of the hour then checks your activity ; it is no longer possible to go and *see madame So-and-So*, or to *hear Glück*, or to do a hundred useless things in which apparently you are only interested in order that you may leave me the sooner. But do not imagine that I am reproaching you, these remarks are nothing more nor less than those which the deep interest I feel in you makes it impossible for me not to make ; but I am so far from wishing to be exacting, that a hundred times a day I tell myself that I must take command of myself ; that I must subdue my emotions till they are at the level at which, while they are no longer strong enough to torment my mind, one expects nothing and is grateful for anything ; that is to say, that if by any chance it was passion which filled my mind, I should have to manage to conquer it rather than try to make you share it. And do you

know, my friend, the source from which I may derive such strength? It is my deep persuasion that it is not in your power to give happiness to an active and passionate mind. I will not say what it would be so natural to think: that I am not made to inspire deep feelings, that I must not claim to please, or to attach. No doubt all that is true; but it is not the reason for my telling you that you are incapable of giving happiness to a strong and sensitive mind. I give such a mind the beauty of madame de Forcalquier at twenty, the nobility of madame de Brionne, the graces of Aglae and the wit of madame de M . . ., adorned or *tricked out* with that of madame de Boufflers; and when I have created this perfect being, I repeat that it is not in you to make it happy. Why? Oh, this is *why:* because you are ambitious, and because love is only an *accident* of your age, and forms no part of your mind though it may sometimes disturb it. Because your mind is, more than anything, lofty, noble, great, active, but not sensitive, or tender, or passionate, and if I had to prove what is as clear as daylight to me, I should say to you: read the *Constable* and then be honest with yourself, and say: "She knows, she tells me, the secret of my heart."

Oh, believe that I am in despair because I have seen so clearly; I so much need to love what I find lovable, it gives me so much pleasure. It is so impossible for me to love in moderation, that the greatest misfortune which could happen to me was to find in you the one thing which could check and perhaps extinguish my feeling for you; for I will admit candidly that I cannot find in myself the power to love alone. If I am convinced that I am not alone, I have the strength of a martyr, I fear no sort of misfortune. Even while suffering, and suffering deeply, I could still hold life dear, could still worship and bless

the man who made me suffer; but only on condition that he loved me, loved me because I attracted him and not out of gratitude, or calculation, or virtue; that is detestable, and can only wither and dishearten a mind that feels things deeply.

Oh, do not let us make of the greatest blessing nature has granted us a mere work of charity, or a dishonourable action. My friend, there are times when I feel myself on a level with you; I have strength, loftiness of character, and a sovereign contempt for all that is vile and dishonourable. In a word, so deeply has contempt for life penetrated my mind that under whatever form it presented itself, it would not terrify me for one moment, and almost always I have active need of it. From the knowledge I have of myself and of you, I repeat again: let us love, or part for ever; let us be true and generous in our conduct, and set enough value on ourselves to believe that everything is possible to us except to deceive ourselves and to live in that state of trouble and fear which uncertainty whether one is loved or not must necessarily bring. When one is in that state, my friend, one has no confidence in oneself or in the man one loves; one can enjoy nothing. For instance, at this moment I am passionately longing for you to come back from Auteuil, and then in another moment I think I should like you to stay there. Can you realise what suffering this struggle between the desire of the heart and the wish that is born of reflection brings with it? *Conclusion:* I love you to desperation, and yet something tells me that is not how you ought to be loved. That *something* rings so loudly in my mind that I am all but ready to silence everything else, in order to give myself up entirely to the horrible truth.

My friend, I am sending you your works, that you may have the kindness to revise them; put the

finishing touches to them, and be sure that no one in the world sets so high a value as I do on everything you do, and are capable of doing. Without vanity, I do think that one might devote one's vanity, one's pride, one's virtue, one's pleasure, in a word, one's existence, to loving you : but that is not what I said a moment ago ! No : but then I said what I thought, and knew, while at this moment I am led on to tell you what I feel ; and my mind is so strong in love, and my intelligence so small, so weak, so limited, that I ought to forbid myself every emotion and every expression which does not come from my heart. It is my heart that speaks to you when I say : *I wait for you, I love you, I should like to be utterly yours and then to die.*

Farewell, here are some visitors. I am so taken up with you, so deeply occupied with my regrets, that society means nothing to me now but importunity and constraint. There are only two kinds of existence which I find good : to see you, and to be alone, really alone, with no books, no light, no noise. I am far from complaining of my sleeplessness : it is the best part of the day. Admire, I beg you, how much it costs me to leave you, while you have not once looked back at me, or thought of me. Heavens, are you the happier for it ? Yes.

Letter 34

TO THE SAME

Sunday.

How kind you are to give me an account of what you are doing and thinking, and of what occupies your attention. How I love the ardour and activity of your

mind and brain. My friend, you have before you so many avenues to fame, that you would be blameworthy if you desired war, that scourge of humanity. Give yourself up to your talents, to your genius; write, and by enlightening and interesting men you will win the fame which is most flattering to a sensitive and virtuous mind. By doing good, you will enjoy the celebrity that is best deserved, and is indeed the only kind desirable in an age when there is no choice but between baseness and frivolity, between slavery and tyranny. Heavens, how I hate and despise them, and how horrible I should find it had I to begin again the life I have led these last ten years. I have seen the workings of vice at such close quarters, I have so often been the victim of the petty and vile passions of the worldly, that I have come to have an invincible disgust for them, and a terror of them which would make me prefer complete solitude to their detestable society. But whither am I straying? My mind, a prey to the most cruel and the most rending of emotions, has no need to turn back to the past to feel overwhelmed beneath the weight of my destiny.

I am dying with longing to see the outline of your play[1]; you will be the creator of the subject, for it seems to me to have only enough action and interest to make a few scenes. So much the greater will be your merit when you hold and interest for five acts. Racine had that *magic power* in *Bérénice!* Your subject is greater and more noble, and well suited to your mind. You will have no need to exalt yourself; without an effort you will always be on a level with what seems exalted to vulgar and common minds.

[1] *Anne Boleyn*, a tragedy, was never staged, but is printed in the comte de Guibert's *Oeuvres dramatiques*. [Note by the comte de Villeneuve-Guibert.]

Yes, my friend, my days are all alike; but soon I shall be alone. All my friends are going away, and for the first time in my life their departure will not cost me a regret and, if I should not seem to you to be too ungrateful, I should tell you that I should find a kind of pleasure in seeing M. d'Alembert leave. His presence weighs upon my mind, he makes me ill at ease with myself, I feel myself too unworthy of his friendship and his virtues. So, judge of my disposition: what ought to be a consolation to me only increases my unhappiness; but that is because I do not want to be consoled, my regrets and my memories are dearer to me than all the care and help of friends. My friend, either my mind must be entirely taken out of its grief—and you alone can do that—or it must feed solely upon it. If you only knew how cold and empty books seem to me. How useless it seems to talk or to answer! My first reaction to everything is to say "*what's the use?*" and I have not yet found an answer to that question; so that sometimes I remain for two hours without uttering a word, and for the last month I have not touched a pen except to write to you. I am quite aware that there is no friendship so strong as not to be rebuffed by such behaviour, but I am prepared for that, my mind is hardened, it no longer fears little misfortunes.

Oh, how misery concentrates one's faculties! How little one needs when one has lost everything! How many benefits I owe you, my friend! How deeply I ought to be grateful to you! You bring back life to my soul; you make me feel some interest in waiting for to-morrow; you promise me your news, that hope is a point on which my thoughts may fix. You had promised me still more: I was to see you; but I will say to you with *Andromache*

The unhappy look for lesser favours.

Farewell, I am abusing your time, your goodness, but it is so pleasant, so natural to forget oneself with the one whom one loves. My wound is so lively, my mind so ill, my mechanism so suffering, that even if you were susceptible only of the emotion of pity, I am sure you would be at my side, and would wish to cause the balm of sensibility and comfort to sink deep into my heart. Till to-morrow, my friend, for your letter will touch me, and I shall need to answer it.

Thursday, after the post.

Well, I have not had a letter; and that surprises me far less than it hurts me: it is so easy when one is enjoying oneself, to forget the sufferer, that I shall take good care not to reproach you for what is only the very natural consequence of the state of your mind in the place you are at.

You have the Chevalier with you; he will have told you my news. I was not well on the day he saw me; I had an attack of convulsions like that which you saw me in, and I had wept most of the night. I did not sleep last night; I was suffering too much. I am better now, I only feel weak and worn out; yesterday I received a violent shock, I had a conversation, I learned details, I saw once more a certain handwriting, I read words which I ought not to have survived. Oh! my life's blood would be only a small price to pay for such an affection. Imagine then what I must think of yours.

The abbé Morellet said a day or two ago in the innocence of his heart that you were deeply in love with the little comtesse de Boufflers, that your mind was most wholly occupied with her, with the desire to please her, etc. . . . Even if this is not altogether true, it is so probable that I think that I should have nothing to complain of except your

failure to take me into your confidence. I only ask you one thing, to put yourself right with me: that is, tell me the truth. Believe that there is no truth, none at all, that I am not strong enough to hear. I may seem to you to be weak, weak enough for you to think you must humour me. That is not true. Never, on the contrary, have I felt myself so strong; I have the strength to suffer, and I no longer fear anything in the world, not even what you think would do me most harm. Farewell, then.

Letter 35

TO THE SAME

Tuesday evening.

I *suspicious*, and of you! Only think how freely I gave myself to you; not only did I show neither distrust nor prudence in my conduct, but I should not even have known regret or remorse had I not compromised my happiness and my honour. My friend, I do not know whether I have ever loved better; but the man who has the power to make me unfaithful and guilty, the man for whom I still live after the loss of the object and interest of my every moment, he it is, assuredly who has had the chief empire over my mind; he it is who has deprived me of the liberty to live for another, and to die when neither hope nor desire was left. Doubtless, I have been kept in bondage by the same charm which drew me to you, by the all-powerful charm of your personality, which intoxicates my mind, and leads it so enormously astray as to efface even the memory of my woes. My friend, you are more powerful than God: with three words you create a new soul for me, you fill it with an interest so lively, a

sentiment so tender and so deep, that I lose the faculty of remembering the past, or foreseeing the future. Yes, my friend, I live entirely in you; I exist, because I love you, and that is so true that it seems to me impossible not to die when I have lost the hope of seeing you. The happiness of having seen you, the desire, the waiting to see you again help me to bear up against my grief. Alas! what will become of me when, instead of hope, I have only the painful, oh, so painful, regret of not seeing you. My friend, with you, I have not been able to die; without you, I have not the power, or the wish, to live. Oh! If you only knew what I am suffering, what dreadful pangs my heart feels when I am left to myself, when your presence, or your thoughts, no longer sustain me.

Ah! it is at such times that the memory of M. de Mora becomes a feeling so active, so piercing, that my life and my affection for you horrify me. I detest the frenzy and passion which made me so guilty, which made me fill with distress and fear a heart so sensitive and so entirely mine. My friend, do you realise how much I love you? You divert me from the regret and remorse which tear my heart; alas, they were bitter enough to deliver me from a life which I loathe. You alone, and my grief, are all that are left to me in all the world; I have no more interest in life, no other blessings, no other friends, I have no need of them: to love you, to see you, or to die: this is the last, the only, prayer of my heart. Your heart does not answer mine, I know . . . and I do not complain. It is strange, I know, and I could never explain it to you, but I am far from wishing to find in you all that I have lost: it would be too much. What creature has ever realised more fully than I all the value of life? Is it not enough to have cherished and blessed nature once? How many thousands of

men have passed through the world without any cause to give her thanks! How well I have been loved! A mind compact of fire, full of energy, a mind which had judged and valued everything and then had returned disgusted with everything and had given itself up wholly to the need, and the delight, of love: my friend, *that* is how I was loved. Several years had gone by, full of the charm and the pain which are inseparable from a passion as strong as it was deep, when you came to pour poison into my heart, to waste my mind with distress and remorse. Heavens, what have you not made me suffer! You tore me away from my deepest feelings, and I saw that you were not really mine. Do you understand the full horror of the situation? How does one contrive to live in the midst of such great woes? How does one still find it sweet to say: my friend, I love you, love you so truly, so tenderly that it is impossible that your heart should remain cold while you listen to me. Farewell.

Wednesday, after the post.

You are *displeased;* just consider whether you ought to be: in whose mind have you ever roused feelings tenderer and stronger? My friend, from whatever angle you observe and judge my heart, I defy you ever to find anything in it that can *displease* you. Oh! I am sure of it, you have never been so much loved. But, Heavens, do not make me put into words the reason why I cannot write to you in the place you are in; I dare not even admit the reason to myself: it is a thought, an emotion, on which I do not wish to dwell; it is a kind of torture which horrifies me, humiliates me, and which I have never known before.

You ask me what effect seeing you every day has had on me? No, it was not a habit, it could never

become one. How cold, how monotonous those shades of meaning are! How can they be compared for a moment with the rapid, the violent, emotions which are caused by the name and the presence of the man one loves. No, no, I have not been lucky enough to catch myself in the illusion of hoping for you and expecting you; also, I have not heard my door open or shut. In truth, when one has no interests, no desires, what does it matter what one sees or hears! Utterly given up to my regrets, I feel henceforward the need of one thing only, and I pray only for you and for death. You comfort my heart, you fill it with so tender an emotion that life is sweet all the time I am with you, but death alone can deliver me from the misery of your absence.

Letter 36

TO THE SAME

Sunday, midnight.

So you have forgotten, you have given up that fury at once so mad and so malicious; if you had only left her in hell, she would not complain: the warmth and activity of that abode give her life. But the poor wretch has spent her day in purgatory; she was waiting for a consoling angel who never came. No doubt he was giving happiness and pleasure to some heavenly creature; he was himself intoxicated with the pleasures of heaven, and while he was in that disposition nothing could bring me back to his mind; and if, in truth, he is so fortunate, from the bottom of my heart I trust that nothing will bring him back to me, for I am unjust enough to detest his happiness

and to wish repentance and remorse to dog his footsteps ceaselessly. A worse wish still I have for him, that he may no more love, and henceforth inspire no more than indifference. This is the prayer, the earnest desire of the heart which has loved better than any other, and more than any other needs eternal annihilation. Good-night.

Letter 37

TO THE SAME

Tuesday, 11.0 *p.m.* (6 *July*).

Heavens, how little I saw you, how ill I saw you to-day, and how painful it is to me not to know where you are at this moment. I hope that you are at Ris, and that you will come to-morrow evening. They say that the comte de Broglie is expected to-morrow morning. It is singular that I should be inclined to take an interest in his return, to want it to be sooner than even his friends can wish. Heavens, how strangely an emotion changes, and overturns every thing! The *I*, of which Fenelon speaks is still a chimaera; I feel so positively that I am not *I;* I am *you*, and in order to be you I have no sacrifices to make. Your interests, your affections, your happiness, your pleasures, *they*, my friend, are the *I* which is dear to me, which is very close to me. Everything else is indifferent to me, you alone in all the world can occupy my attention and fix my affections; my thoughts, my soul, can henceforward be full only of you and the tortures of regret. Oh, no, it is not when I compare you with myself that the fear of not being loved torments me. Alas, it is when I think of *how*

I was loved, and by whom : but that was an unspeakable happiness to which I ought never to have aspired, and which you can clearly see I did not deserve.

How my mind is suffering, how painful these memories are to me ! My friend, what will become of me when I see you no more, when I do not look for your coming ? Do you think I can continue to live ? The very thought kills me ; in ten days. . . . But tell me why I should need no courage to die, and yet have not the strength to tell myself that there will be a day, a moment, when you will say a word which makes me shudder ? My friend, do not ever say it, it has brought me misfortune ; that awful word was destined to be my condemnation : if I hear it, I die.

How can you praise me for loving you ? The merit and the virtue would have lain in resisting the inclination, the attraction, which drew me to you long before I had any reason to distrust myself. How can one fear, how can one foresee the future, when one is safeguarded by affection, by misfortune, by the inestimable blessing of being loved by a perfect creature ? My friend, these were the guardians which surrounded and protected my mind, when you caused the distress of remorse and the warmth of passion to descend upon it. And then you praise me for loving you ! Oh, my love is a crime, and its very excess does not justify me. But I am going to make you hate me, for I am like *Pyrrhus*, I give myself up to crime with the zest of a criminal. Yes, to love you, or to die, I know no other virtue or law in nature ; and that emotion is so true, so involuntary, so strong, that truly you owe me nothing. Oh, how far I am from demanding, or claiming, anything ! My friend, be happy, take pleasure in being loved, and we are quits.

I am mad, I can only speak to you of what I feel, and I should like to tell you what I have seen : I mean

the Chevalier. He asked for news of you, and if I was pleased with you : was it not kind of him ! He would like all my friends to love me as much as he does. Could you ever do so ? He arrived yesterday, and went away again to-day. So we shall go to Auteuil[1] on Thursday ; the good Cardon and M. Suard go with us. Be punctual when we meet at my house at 12.30.

Come, my friend, do come ; consider that I might have dined with you to-morrow, that I might have seen you this evening. Be kind, be generous ; give me all the minutes that are not devoted to your pleasures and your business ; I want to come second to these, I must ; if this is asking too much, at least let me desire it.

Your guess was marvellously right this morning : I did want your answer, and not my book. Would to God that by giving up all the books that have been, or will be, written, I could assure myself of a letter from you every day ! That is what I should like to read, it is you whom I should like to see and listen to unceasingly. My friend, I love you.

Letter 38

TO THE SAME

Monday evening.

I HAVE four letters to answer ; I have tried to write, but found it impossible. My mind is occupied with you. I do not know whether I love you, but I feel, only too deeply, that you disturb and agitate my mind, in a way that both pains and grieves me, when I do

[1] Where the comtesse de Boufflers lived. [V-G.]

not see you, or when I am not sustained by the pleasurable activity of expecting your arrival. I have told you, I have done my best to tell you, the charm your presence had for me: but, my friend, how feeble are words to express one's strongest feelings! The brain finds words, the heart would need to create a new language. Yes, assuredly, I have more sensations than there are words to express them; how, indeed, shall I ever be able to tell you all the good and all the harm you do me? Your presence has such power, such dominion, over me, that it gives me a new life, and does not leave me even the memory of that which I led before I met you. I am so animated, so absorbed, by the impressions I receive, that it is only through you that I can now find happiness or misery. I love, I enjoy, I fear, I suffer, and not once amidst all these diverse emotions does either remembrance of the past or prevision of the future enter in. My friend, in the days when men believed in enchantments, I should have explained all that you make me feel by saying that you had the power to throw over me a spell which took me out of myself. But if that was so, if you had such a power, how cruel I should think you for not prolonging the illusion which makes me feel, at least momentarily, that life may be a blessing. Yes, to you I owe the knowledge, the taste, of pleasure which intoxicates the mind to the point of taking away from it all feeling of pain and grief, but do you think I owe you any thanks for that? The spell is lifted the moment you leave me, and when I come back to my own mind, I feel overwhelmed with regret and remorse; the loss I have suffered tears me to pieces. I was loved, and loved to a degree which the imagination cannot conceive. All that I have read was cold and feeble compared with the passion of M. de Mora: it filled his whole life, judge then if it must have

occupied mine. This regret would indeed be enough to bring grief and despair to a sensitive mind. Well, my suffering is made still more cruel by the remorse which weighs upon my mind ; I see myself guilty.

I find that I am unworthy of the happiness which I have enjoyed. A moment's crime crushes all my life ; it seems to me that it was all in vain that I was honest till I knew you. What does it matter, indeed, what I *have* been ? I know, I feel, that I have failed the most virtuous, the most affectionate, man in the world, I know that I have failed in my duty to virtue, in a word, I have failed myself, and lost my self-respect. How can I, then, have the right to claim your respect, and if you do not respect me, how can I be so blind as to imagine that you can love me ? When I know myself so well, when such are the reflections which my self-knowledge brings in its train, do you think there can be a more wretched creature than I ? Oh, my friend, the mobility of mind for which you reproach me, and which I confess, only serves me when I see you ; it causes my whole life to revolve round one single point : I live in and by you. But do you know something else which is the result of this mobility ? It makes me feel in a single hour every kind of torture which can depress and shatter the mind. Yes, it is true. I sometimes feel the agony, the discouragement, of death, and at the same instant, the paroxysms of despair. This mobility is nature's secret to make one live more vigorously in one day than the common man lives in a hundred years. It is true that this mobility which is in times of misfortune only an added curse, is sometimes, when one's state of mind is calm, the source of much pleasure ; perhaps even it is a means of one's being lovable, because it is a method of bringing vanity into play and flattering people's self-esteem. A hundred times I have felt that I was

pleasing by the impression made on me by the talents and wit of the people with whom I was; and, as a rule I am only liked because people think, or see, that they are making an impression on me: never because of the impression they receive from me. This proves at once the poverty of my wit and the activity of my mind, and in this remark there is neither vanity nor modesty: it is simple truth.

My friend, I want to tell you the secret of my heart as to the very slight impression which, as you declare, the idea of a four months' separation made on me; I promised myself to gain from it *this*: an entire surrender and return to my grief and to the unconquerable distaste which I have for life. I thought that when my mind was no longer floating between the hope and the pleasure of seeing you, of having seen you, it would have more than the necessary strength to deliver me from a life which would no longer offer me anything but regret and remorse. *That*, I swear to you, is the thought which has filled my mind for almost two months, and this active and deep-seated need to be delivered from my miseries has sustained me, and still protects me from the grief which your absence would cause me. Do not jump to the conclusion that I want to prove to you that I love you passionately; no, my friend, all this only proves that I cling eagerly to that which gives me pleasure, and it gives me the strength to suffer. I have told you before, these words are engraved upon my heart, and they pronounce my sentence: *to love you, to see you, or to die.* After this say all the ill you like about my sensibility, prove to me that I have only become contemptible because I have loved you, that you have only doubted my heart because I have given it to you, and in a word that you have only ceased to respect me because I have sacrificed my feelings and my honesty for you; all this must be

the result, the cost, of infidelity and the desertion of virtue. I am so intimately persuaded of it, that you may have noticed that I have never tried to combat the ill opinion you have of me; I find you neither severe, nor unjust. You alone, in the natural world, have the right to misesteem me and to doubt the strength and the truth of the passion which has animated me for five whole years.

Letter 39

TO THE SAME

Tuesday.

I left you yesterday evening, because I thought I should tire you by talking so much about myself. You were so close to me, that it pained me that you did not interrupt me. But listen, to-day I must speak to you of yourself; but before I begin, do believe, I beg of you, that I do not want to reproach you; I do not consider that I have the right, and I should be wretched if I displeased you. The interest I feel in you makes me suffer from a thousand things which are of no importance to you: one must love if one is to realise the harm one does to a person who loves one; hope does not give one the delicacy which is necessary in dealing with a mind that is sick and unhappy. But introductions are tiresome, let us come to the point. My friend, you wanted to keep your journey a secret from me; if its object was honourable why were you afraid to tell me of it? And if this journey must hurt my affection, why do you make it? If you do not owe me your love, you owe it to yourself to be honest and not to deceive me. You never treat me with full and unrestrained confidence, it always seems

that the things you tell me escape you almoſt againſt your will. You left yeſterday, and I could not find out where you were going to spend the night; I do not know where you are, I am in complete ignorance about you and your actions.[1] My friend, is that the behaviour of even ordinary friendship? And do you imagine that I can think, without any pain, that of your own free will you will be for twelve days without hearing a word of me? And do you suppose, too, that I have not been seriously hurt by the fact that when you expected to leave me to-day for four months, you were not willing to give me the laſt evening you were to spend in Paris? If you loved me, you would have seen how you hurt me when you told me on Saturday evening that you would be going to madame d'Arcambal's the next day. I could not find words to answer, but it hurt.

That is not all, I want to tell you everything that I have in my heart againſt you; it will do you no harm, and will comfort me. . . . You make a merit of all that you do not do for madame de M. . . ., you parade it; but, my friend, is that juſt? Have you forgotten that you told me twenty times, laſt year, that you reproached yourself for everything that you did for her? I saw you disposed to take the moſt violent course, to break with her entirely, not to see her again. I remember that I opposed that resolution, and you know that at that time I did not want to be happy through you, and you know, too, that when I

[1] One can underſtand that M. de Guibert said nothing to Mlle de Lespinasse as to the reasons for his absence. He was at this moment —May, 1774—going to spend a few days at the château of Courcelles-le-Roi, in the Orléanais. This eſtate belonged to the parents of Mlle Louise Alexandrine Boutinon des Hayes de Courcelles, whom it was proposed that he should marry, and who did, in faſt, become the comtesse de Guibert in the following year, 1775. [Note by the comte de Villeneuve-Guibert.]

changed my mind I did not change my language. Have I ever said a word to turn you from whatever you wished to do for her ? Have I tried to make you cold towards her, to keep you from her ? No doubt I have done no more than my duty, but are you not lacking in delicacy when you want me to be obliged to you because our shares are not absolutely equal ? My friend, there is this difference between us : she *has* loved you, and I love you. After that, there is no room to speak of sacrifice.

Letter 40

TO THE SAME

Thursday, 11.0 *p.m.*

I HAVE had no news of you ; I did not hope to have any, and yet I waited for them. Ah, Heavens, how can you say that grief is no longer in my heart ? It brought me to death's door yesterday, I had an access of despair which gave me convulsions which lasted two hours. My friend, if I must tell you what I believe, what is the truth, it is this : when I see you, I love you to desperation, so much as to think that I have never loved better ; but I need your presence in order to love you : all the rest of my life is spent in memories, regrets and tears. Yes, leave me, tell me you love another : I wish it, I desire it. The evil from which I suffer is so deep, so heart-rending, that I have no longer any hope of comfort but from death ; the comfort you bring me has the effect of opium ; it gives relief from my malady, but does not cure it ; on the contrary, it leaves me weaker and more sensitive. You are right, I am no longer capable of love, I know only how to suffer. I had put my hope

in you, I had abandoned myself to hope, I thought that the pleasure of loving you would calm my misery. Alas, it is in vain that I fly from it, it calls me unceasingly, it carries me away, and leaves me only one way of escape. Do not speak to me of the escape I find in social life; it is nothing more to me now than an unendurable constraint, and if I could persuade M. d'Alembert not to live with me, my doors would be closed. How can you believe that the inventions of the intelligence will have more power over me than the charm and the consolations of friendship? I have friends who are the worthiest, the most deep-feeling, the most virtuous of people: each, in his own way and in his own language, would like to touch my heart; I am filled with gratitude for all their great kindness—but I remain unhappy. You alone, my friend, can make me know, not happiness, but pleasure. What a deadly poison is pleasure! it makes me cling to life while I pray for death. But why do you set some store on being loved by me? You had no need of my love; you knew perfectly well that you could not return it: can you have been playing with my despair? Take full possession of my heart, or else torment it no more; make me love you always, or make me never to have loved you; do the impossible, in a word; calm me, or I die. But, my friend:

> Let this horrible secret remain buried in profound forgetfulness.

What are you doing at this moment? You are bringing distress to a mind to which time had given calm; you abandon me to my grief, and you make Mme de M. . . . think that she has lost you. Might not one say to you:

> Invent secrets to torture men's hearts.

Oh, if only you could feel things, if you had time to listen to the voice of virtue, you would deserve pity, my friend, for you would know remorse. But, at least, if your heart cannot find a resting-place, give yourself up to your talents: occupy yourself, work and work hard; for if you continue your present life of dissipation and excitement, I fear that one day you will be reduced to saying:

The need of fame has worn out my soul.

Saturday evening.

I have only had news of you this morning, and I do not know whence or how they came, certainly not by the post. Consider me to be mad, if you like, think me unjust, or anything else you like; but that will not prevent me from telling you that never in my life, I think, have I received a more painful, a more insulting, impression than that which your letter made on me; and, with equal truth, I will tell you that the kind of harm you have done me is hardly worth attention, because I think it is my self-pride which has suffered, and in a way quite new to me. I felt so humiliated, so overwhelmed, that I could have given anyone the appalling right to say to me the things which I was reading, and to say them with such a natural air that I was bound to conclude that he had only been pouring out his deepest soul when he wrote, without the least idea that he was offending me mortally. Oh, how well you have avenged M. de Mora! how cruelly you punish me for the madness, the wicked folly, which drew me to you! How I loathe them! I will not go into details: you have neither kindness enough, nor delicacy enough, for my heart to endure to complain. My heart, my pride, all that animates me, that makes me feel, think, breathe,

in a word, everything that is in me, is revolted, wounded, offended, and for ever. You have given me back strength enough, not to endure my misery—it seems greater and more overwhelming than ever—but to assure myself that I can never again be tormented, or made unhappy, by you. Judge then the excess of my crime, and the immensity of my loss: I feel, and my grief does not deceive itself, that if M. de Mora was alive, and could have read your letter, he would have forgiven me, he would have consoled me, and he would have hated you. Oh, God, leave me my regrets, they are a thousand times more dear to me than what you call your affection: it is hateful to me: its very expression is an insult, and my mind rejects it with such horror that I am assured that it is still worthy of virtue.

How did you dare, how could you resolve, to set down on paper characters which, if they had fallen under the eyes of anyone else, would dishonour and ruin me for ever! If *that* is the expression of what you think and of what you feel for me, at least have the goodness to believe that I will never fall so low as to justify myself, and ask your pardon; and even if you were to think that you had only done me justice, rather than enter into any explanation I prefer that you should keep that opinion. So this is the end: be on what terms you like, or on what terms you can, with me; for my part, in future, if there is a future for me, I shall be to you what I ought always to have been, and if it were not that you leave remorse in my soul, I should sincerely hope to forget you. I feel it, a wounded vanity makes the heart cold. I had not been used to be treated with such cruelty and such liberty; it is true too that, before, I had not been guilty: a reflection which makes me think you less so, but you do not all the same seem any more honourable.

I do not know why I have let you read all I had written before getting your letter; you will see in it all my weakness, but not all my misery. I hoped for nothing from you, I did not want to be consoled: so why pity me? Oh, why? Because a sick man who is condemned to die still looks for the coming of his doctor, because his eyes are still lifted to his relations in search of hope, because the last utterance of the heart is a cry. That is the explanation of my inconsistency, my folly, my weakness. How fully I am punished for it. If ever I found myself thinking a thought which could offend the feelings which M. de Mora had for me, I should read your letter again: I should be humiliated by it, and thus expiate my crime. Give me back these sheets, and be honourable enough to take as your guide the line of *Phaedra* which I quoted.

Letter 41

TO THE SAME

Thursday.

Your words would indeed be sweet and amiable if they told me that I was going to see you, but the doubt destroys the sensible impression I should so much like to receive from what you say to me. Heavens, you disturb my life, you make me experience in one day the most contrary emotions. I am at one moment led on by the most passionate longing, and then frozen by the idea that your feelings do not respond to mine. Then that reflection makes me loathe myself, and to find a little calm I abandon myself to the torturing memory of what I have lost. Soon after, my mind is filled with a softer emotion, and I am in a condition

to think of the moments of happiness which love brought me. All these thoughts which ought to drive you far away, very quickly bring me closer to you; I feel that I love you, and it is enough for me to be able to hope for some repose elsewhere than in death. It is my sole support, the only help I expect, and I feel the need of it almost every moment of my life. My friend, you laid balm on the little wound when I cut myself last night, because you noticed it as soon as I did it. That goes to prove the truth of M. d'Alembert's saying, that there are circumstances when pain is not pain.

Yes, you shall have the *Eulogy* before midnight. I am going to send to the archbishop of Toulouse for it. Good-morning again, my friend: you are the cause of my sadness, my silence, my misery: in a word you give life to my soul, and it carries me away. I dare not tell you how much I love you.

Letter 42

to the same

Wednesday, 10 *o'clock.*

You do not care whether you hear from me again to-day or not, but I am sufficiently indifferent to you not to be afraid of disturbing the various interests which distract you. So listen to me, and let us do what madame de Montespan proposed to madame de Maintenon. Compelled to make a long journey alone with her, "Madam," she said, "let us forget our hatred, and our quarrels, and bear each other good company, etc., etc. . . ." Well, I say to you: let us forget our mutual annoyance, and do you be friendly enough to do what I ask you: write me a

short essay on *military discipline*, I need it. I do not ask for a long, carefully reasoned, work, but for *precepts*, texts, in a word a summary of what you think on this important subject. Yes, it is I who am speaking, and I am not mad, at least not in this respect: my madness is of a kind that is not so dry, and more unhappy.

Good-night; you were almost sad just now; I was worried by it but had no self-reproach, for as you know

To think oneself faithless, one must think one is loved.

The Chevalier explained your sadness to me, and I pitied you from the bottom of my heart.

Do not refuse what I ask: I promise you, *as a recompense*, that bad synonym: *weeping* and *tears:* it is a bad one, but it is touching enough to bring tears to the eyes of the man I love, and would make a man of wit and taste weep with boredom, but you see I do not open my heart to such people. Good-night; where are you? Undoubtedly, you are well off: you are gay, animated, interested, and wholly given up to what you are seeing. That is what we call being eminently amiable. *Tancred*—oh, it is very fine: there are lines which rouse echoes in the depth of one's soul. But nothing fits in with a mind that is active, suffering, disturbed: it must live on itself. So good-bye.

Letter 43

TO THE SAME[1]

Thursday.

I send the ancient philosophers to the youngest of all the philosophers; I should like him to see that he does not lose his book: it has become rare. Send me

[1] Unpublished. [V-G].

back the volume which contains the *Examination of Barri*. I want it. Look round for it, I am sure you have it, with various *Collected Papers* of Voltaire. Good-bye, my friend, my chest hurts me, and that is because my mind is sick. How greatly I am to be pitied! I owe you my life, and I am miserable. I must see you for a moment: to whom could you give it who would realise its value and enjoy it more than I should?

Letter 44

Monday, 11 *p.m.*

I have just been talking to M. d'Alembert about you and *your interests*, and the idea has come to me of making a suggestion which is quite mad, and that is exactly why I do not despair of your agreeing to it. Come and spend to-morrow with me in the country; madame Le Droit will be charmed, and that is no exaggeration. If you are engaged in the evening, we will come back early enough for neither you, nor those who are expecting you, to miss your pleasure. Now do see if you can tear yourself from your business, your worries, your amusements, your appointments, from the Opera, from calls, from all the vagueness and emptiness of existence, in a word from the mass of important affairs to which you dedicate your life. But above all, though doubtless this advice is both useless and presumptuous, do not make any sacrifice for me; on the contrary, it is I who am ready to make them all. If you refuse me, I promise I will be neither astonished nor annoyed. It is quite natural that when you are on the point of departure, every moment should be occupied; but at least do not waste those

which you deign to bestow on me. Employ them. I give you to-morrow evening: I will go to bed when I get home. Wednesday evening I have promised to spend at Menilmontant, and if I am not too ill, I shall go. I sent to excuse myself for after dinner to-day, saying I was too unwell, for you can well believe I could have no hope of seeing you. It is very good of you to have given me a few minutes, I had not expected it, and I thank you a thousand times and from the bottom of my heart, I assure you. If you give me your day to-morrow, you must be at my house before mid-day; if, on the other hand, I am giving my day to you, do not come at all; I get up late, I shall be in a hurry to dress, and you would only make me regret not being able to talk to you; but on Wednesday I shall be luckier, since you are not going away. Let me have an answer, I beg of you.

Letter 45

TO THE SAME

Saturday, the end of July, 1774.

I am distressed, not because you have caught cold, but because you will act in such a way that the cold will become an illness. You ought to stay in bed all day, and you are already proposing to go out! For pity's sake, my friend, drink your medicine, keep entirely to your bed, and don't read or write. I reproach myself for the note you sent me, and you will not have a moment's rest until you have written, answered and replied to all *those ladies.*

I was expecting you any time after nine o'clock; there was barley water, marsh-mallow, orgeat, so as to compel you to take a *bavaroise:* that is what it is

called, and not soup. Heavens, how I should like to be at your bed-side. I would take care of you, never would a nurse show such zeal and affection. My friend, don't go out, let people think you have gone away, and perhaps if you take care of yourself like that you will be well enough to leave to-morrow morning. Certainly, you shall not go at night, that would be madness; if you sleep at Orleans, you will not be tired. You do not tell me whether you are feverish at the moment; I will send for news of you at one o'clock; for pity's sake, my friend, do not go out. I shall hear news of you several times during the day, and to that end I am going to dine at home, and shall not go out before nine this evening. My friend, I command you to spend the evening in bed: I assure you that if you do not take care you will turn it into pneumonia. But you have no doubt written to your father: if he knows you well, he will be less anxious, because he will not count on your punctuality. See how harsh I am, what a time I choose to rebuke you! Yes, indeed, you are in the wrong to be ill. Well, would my anxiety have been well founded, if you had left yesterday? My friend, drink—but *what*? I am afraid those waters are too active: try mallow or barley-water. If you come to me, you shall have it all ready, but don't come, no, don't come. Take care of yourself for her who loves you so tenderly.

Letter 46

TO THE SAME

Thursday, 8.30.

My friend, I love you, it comes home to me, at the moment, painfully; your cold, your chest, distress my mind; I am afraid, and so often has that horrible

feeling been justified that I cannot calm myself. If you leave this evening, you will not sleep, and that will give you a temperature. Heavens, why cannot I suffer all that I am afraid you are suffering? My friend, when you change horses at Orleans, tell me how you are, tell me if your chest gives you much pain. My affection and my interest for you deprive you of the liberty to neglect your health; I die of regret when I think that I shall not see you, that I have no longer any means of reassuring myself. I shall not see you, I shall know nothing of you. Ah! how sweet it was to love you yesterday, how cruel to love you to-day, to-morrow, for ever! My friend, forgive my weakness, but is there not some excuse for my superstition? It was on *Friday*, 7 August, 1772, that M. de Mora left Paris; it was on *Friday*, 6 May of this year, that he left Madrid; and it was on Friday, 27 May, that I lost him for ever. Do you not think that that dreadful word *must* bring horror to my mind, joined as it is with the idea of what I love more than life, more than happiness, more than anything I can express in words? My friend, if by any chance you are not leaving till Saturday, I want to see you to-morrow. What a hateful plan I have made, not to see you again! It would be impossible: you know that. You know full well that when I hate you, it is because I love you so passionately that my reason is distracted. Good-bye, good-bye, my friend, never were you loved and cherished with such tenderness.

Look after yourself; think that to take care of your chest is to save my life. To-morrow . . . The thought of it is dreadful to me. Yes, I love you a thousand times more than I can say.

Letter 47

THE COMTE DE GUIBERT TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Thursday, July, 1774.

I have often spent two days away from you, my friend, but then the two days were not to be followed by an absence of three months. It distresses me. I am pursued by sad thoughts, and this place does not drive them away. Almost all of them relate to you: you are not happy, your health is poor. You are but feebly attached to life, and then only by a feeling to which you have never dared to abandon yourself completely, which is partly stifled by your remorse, and which absence will perhaps destroy entirely. I shudder at leaving you in such a situation, but my father is expecting me; it is already a fortnight since I ought to have left. The season is getting on. What with the visits I am bound to make on the way, and my plan to return here at the end of October, I shall have at most two months to give him. How long I shall find the time, in my anxiety! How tender and how lively that anxiety is! How necessary to me your letters will be! Will mine be equally so to you? I shall make them frequent as if they were. That occupation will poorly fill the void caused by the lack of your company, of your conversation, by the breaking off of the almost daily sight of you which had become so sweet a habit. I feel that my interest in you, my study of you, are enough to fill my life. At your side, my ambition has died. You have given me ideas of rest, of glory, of happiness, quite the opposite of those I used to have. Live, my friend; nothing could take your place for me. Never has my life been more strongly attached to any other person's. I have had more lively, more tumultuous, feelings; never have I

had feelings so sweet, and on which I have to such an extent laid the foundation of my happiness.

I will leave you now, but will come back this evening. The post does not go to-day; so, as I am coming back to-morrow, I will bring it you myself, or at any rate will send it myself, for I am to dine in a country-house on the way, and I shall not see you till Saturday morning. And I am leaving on Monday! Heavens you cannot imagine how the thought obsesses and saddens me.

Letter 48

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Friday morning, July, 1774.

I could not write to you yesterday evening. It was late when I went to bed. Madame de M . . . wanted me to read her the *Eulogy of Catinat* again.[1] She saw your address on the wrapper, in which it was folded, and this was the occasion of a long talk. She complained bitterly of my desertion, my fickleness, of the new connections I was always forming at her expense. That is what she calls my friendship with you. She little dreams what has made it so strong. She has been told that I went every day to your house, and spent all my evenings there. It is not love, or jealousy, which made her reproach me, but she had counted on my friendship, she had looked on it as bringing repose to her heart, as a life-long happiness, and she sees that she is losing me. She was very

[1] This letter was certainly written at La Bretèche, where Madame de Montsauge lived, and whither Guibert had gone on leaving Paris, to bid farewell to that lady, of course concealing his visit from Mlle de Lespinasse. [V-G.]

touching, much affected, roused great interest in me, and yet neither on my part nor on hers was there the slightest trace of anything to do with our old affections.

After this, she spoke of her affairs, her intentions, her folly, her plan of life, her friendships present and past; she showed much reasonableness, philosophy, and intelligence. I should have liked you to have heard her. I need not tell you that I answered her as far as you were concerned just as if you had dictated my answers. I told her that I had an infinite friendship for you, that no one could see you without being deeply interested in you, and that the interest was greatly increased by the wise choice of your society, and the excellent conversation that took place in your house. In short, my friend, you would have been very pleased if you had heard me. But this conversation did not lessen my sadness. On Monday I must be parted from you. And for three months.

I do not yet know how I shall get away. The chevalier d'Aguesseau is to come to dinner at Saint-Germain, and afterwards to pick me up here. If he does not come, I shall be in a quandary, but some way or other I shall arrive.

I need to see you, to talk to you—

Letter 49

to mlle de lespinasse

Chartres, Sunday evening, 15 August, 1774.

It is ten o'clock, my friend, I am here, I am well, very well; only my mind is ill, and that illness will last until I return. My thoughts have been all of you. So it will be to-morrow, the next day, every day. Can you guess the first lines I read? Three or four of

your letters which I have in my letter-case, and which have escaped your barbarous mistrust. I have not scrupled to preserve them: "The suspicious man invites treason." I shall reach Rochambeau early to-morrow evening; it is only ten posts away. You will not receive this letter till the day after to-morrow, for as you rightly said, though you did not know, there is not a post every day from Chartres to Paris.

Remember me very kindly to M. d'Alembert. He came to my house, like the good fellow he is, at the very moment of my departure. He found me in a rage which I could not control, because they made me pay for four horses for my carriage. There's another advantage of wealth; one does not worry about a thousand petty details.

Good-bye, my friend. I will write to you from Rochambeau, from Chanteloup, from every place. That is a consolation to me, a pleasure, a need. For the same reasons I count on your punctuality, but I shall only reap the fruits of it in a week.

Letter 50

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Rochambeau, Tuesday, 17 August, 1774.

I got here yesterday evening, my friend, well and so fit that you need no longer have any anxiety. I did not find M. de Rochambeau here. Business kept him in Paris, and he will not arrive till to-morrow. This will prevent my reaching Chanteloup before Thursday, which annoys me. It is a day lost, and I have so few to spend with my family. Why did I not reckon as

lost the days which my cold made me spend in Paris ? Because another emotion was more powerful than my eagerness to get away ; because I could see you. Duty counts for very little by the side of pleasure, and, except on special occasions, one belongs far more to those one loves than to one's family.

Anyhow, I shall be at Chanteloup on Thursday evening, and yet that is not the place which I am really eager to reach, because I shall not find a letter from you there, but at Bordeaux. How cruel you would be if you did not write ! How grateful I should be for the effort it costs you ! Do make the effort, my friend, even if your letter is full of M. de Mora. You know whether I think your grief is justified. Let your tears fall again if they comfort you.

I too could shed tears when I write to you of that fatal place ; it has been fatal to me as well as to you. Five years ago when I first drew near that wretched town, I thought it would kill me. Grief stifled me. And yet another emotion had found a place in a heart which I imagined to be devoted to eternal despair. My friend, I had touched the very gates of death, but when I could not pass through them, but had been kept alive, there remained to me, as well as life, the power to love. And since then, too, how eager for pleasure and amusement I have been ! How completely have I forgotten my unhappiness ?

It makes one weep over the weakness of human nature, to think of the inconstancy, the universal instability, which are its heritage. So, perhaps a time will come when all that we love to-day, all the interests that remain to us on earth, will be annihilated ; and we shall live, we shall survive.

Oh ! rather may I be struck dead ! I would rather leave my loss to be lamented than be compelled to console myself again.

What a letter, my friend! I shall bring sorrow to your heart, and that is not the emotion I should like to rouse in it.

I must leave you. I am going for a walk. If possible, I am going to seek for pleasanter thoughts. The situation of this place is the strangest possible. On one side, the most horrible solitude, rocks overhanging the castle, part of the building is cut out of them, woods, a regular Thebaid: on the other side, a charming prospect, the winding course of the Loir, slopes covered with houses. That is the way by which I shall go; and so mobile is our imagination, that outside objects, even inanimate objects, act on it and modify it in infinite ways. Is this a blessing? Or is it a curse? Oh, it is both. Everything passes away, and so do we: such is life.

I have come in again; and am reading this letter over. I hesitate to send it you. Still I will send it. Why should I conceal any movement of my mind from you, even such as one usually tries to hide even from oneself? I did not mean to write to you anything that this letter contains. The idea of Bordeaux came up, and my mind was full only of disorder and despair. My walk has calmed it. Other objects have occupied it. My thoughts of you have been sweeter. I have seen our friendship to be eternal and smiled at the thought. Yes, you will always be dear to me; and I shall always be dear to you. We are united by a thousand likenesses. Good-bye. Let me have news of you: make up to me for a week of starvation. Good-bye, again.

I will write to you from Chanteloup, if there is a post that day.

Letter 51

TO MONSIEUR DE GUIBERT, AT BORDEAUX

Thursday evening, 25 August, 1774.

Yes, my friend, the most powerful force in nature is indeed passion: it has just imposed a privation on me, and it makes me endure it with courage a thousand times greater than reason and virtue could ever inspire. But passion too is an absolute tyrant; it only makes slaves who alternately loathe and adore their chains, and never have the strength to break them. It commands me to-day to behave in a way utterly opposite to that which I have forced myself to follow for the last fortnight. I realise my inconsistency, I am embarrassed by it, but I yield to the needs of my heart. I find it pleasant to be weak, and even if you took advantage of it, I shall love you, and shall tell you so, sometimes with pleasure, more often with grief, when I think you do not reciprocate my feelings. Listen to all that I have suffered since you left me. An hour after your departure, I learned that you had concealed from me the fact that madame de M . . . had left the day before. Then I thought that you had only put off your departure for her sake. You had not seen me the day before, and I thought it was because you were so distressed by your farewells that you could not see *me* the moment after. In short, what shall I say? I judged you with a passion of which the real character is never to see things as they are. So I saw and believed everything that could increase my distress: I was deceived, you were guilty, you had, at that very time, taken advantage of my tenderness; the thought roused my anger, irritated my pride; I felt in the depths of misery, I could not love you any longer, I detested the moments of pleasure

and consolation which I owed to you; you had torn me away from death, the only resource, the only support which I had promised myself, when I was trembling for the life of M. de Mora; you had made me survive a terrible misfortune; you filled my soul with remorse; you made me feel a still greater pain, hatred of you, yet, my friend, hatred. For more then a week I was filled with that horrible emotion. Meanwhile I received your letter from Chartres: the need of knowing how you were made me fail in my resolution never to again open a letter from you. You told me you were well; you let me see that, in spite of my express desire, you preserved some of my letters, and you quoted a line of *Zaïre* which seemed to mock my misery; and then—and that was the bitter thing—the regrets which the letter contained seemed to me to be vague and intended rather to give vent to your own emotions than to touch my heart. In a word, everything you said I turned into poison, and more than ever decided to love you no longer, and never again to open your letters.

That resolution, which tore my heart-strings, which made me ill, I kept. Since your departure, I am changed and emaciated as if I had had a serious illness. In truth, the fever of the mind which reaches the verge of delirium, is a cruel sickness; there is no frame strong enough to resist such suffering. My friend, pity me, you have hurt me. I only received your letter from Rochambeau on Saturday; I did not open it, and as I put it in my letter case, my heart beat violently; but I bade myself be strong, and I was. How much it cost me to keep that letter! How often I read the address! How many times I had it in my hands! Even at night I felt the need to touch it; in the excess of my weakness, I told myself that I was strong, that I was resisting the greatest of blessings, the greatest of

pleasures; and see how foolish I was! I loved you more actively than ever. For six days, nothing could distract me from that sealed letter; if I had opened it the moment I received it, it would not have made so lively, or so deep, an impression. At last, at last, yesterday, overwhelmed with grief, finding no letter arrive from Chanteloup, when you had promised to write to me, I was struck by the idea that perhaps you were lying ill at Rochambeau, and without my knowing what I was doing, to what temptation I was yielding, your letter was read, re-read, bedewed with my tears, before I had time to think that I must not read it. Oh, my friend, how much I should have lost. I adore your sensibility: what you say of Bordeaux has re-opened a wound which had never closed, and never will close. No, my life will not be long enough to regret and cherish the most sensitive and the most virtuous man who ever existed. What a dreadful thought! I made his last days anxious: though he was afraid he had cause to complain of me, he risked his life for me, and his last impulse was an action of tenderness and passion. I know not whether I shall ever again summon up strength to read his last words; if I had not loved you, my friend, they would have been enough to kill me; I still shudder at them, I see them; and it is you who made me guilty! It is through you that I am still alive, it is you who bring distress to my heart, in a word it is you whom I love, whom I hate, and who alternately tear and charm a heart which is wholly yours. Heavens, do not be afraid of being sad before me; sadness is my element, my existence. You alone, yes, you alone, have the power to change my disposition; your presence leaves me neither memory, nor grief; I have proved that you could distract me even from physical pains. I love you, and all my faculties are roused and enchanted when I see you.

Friday morning.

My friend, I was interrupted yesterday. There is so much news, such excitement, such delight, that one does not know what to listen to. I should like to be really pleased, but I cannot. Some months ago I should have been in transports both at the blessings that are to be hoped for and the evils from which we are delivered; but now only by thought and reflexion can I attune myself to all I see and hear. You know that M. Turgot is Comptroller-General; he has joined the Council; M. d'Angivillier is Minister of Works; M. de Miromesmil is Chancellor; the Chancellor is exiled to Normandy; M. de Sartine has the Admiralty, they say only till there is a vacancy in M. de la Vrillière's department; M. Lenoir is chief of police; M. de Fitz-James is not going to Brittany, the Duc de Penthièvre is to hold the Assembly there with M. de Fourqueux. But really I am as interesting as M. Marin who is being deprived of the *Gazette* in favour of an abbé Aubert who has written some bad fables. But to finish up, I must add that the baron de Breteuil is going to Vienna, and M. de la Vauguyon to Naples: this choice is generally condemned.

Now let us get on to society news. M. d'Alembert yesterday scored the greatest success at the Academy; I was not a witness of it, for I was poorly; I had only just strength enough to sit in my chair. He read the *Eulogy of Descartes* and some anecdotes of Fénelon, which they say were charming. I had no desire to hear them, these last few days; I had nothing in my head but the letter I did not read. One must be calm, if one is to listen; so I listen very rarely. My friend, they are printing a life of Catinat; the author is a M. Turpin who wrote the life of the great Condé. M. d'Alembert has read this *Life*, and from what he says, it will not detract from the novelty or the merit of

your *Eulogy*; still when it comes out, I will send it you.

I have seen a good deal of madame de Boufflers since you left, and I am going either to humiliate or rouse your vanity greatly, by telling you she has not mentioned your name. If that is natural, it is very cold; if it is deliberate, it is decidedly cool. Still I must add, to *stifle your pride*, that she seemed very intent on making an impression on the comte de Crillon. We spent an evening with her, we have been to the fair together, she has been to my house, we are to go to the lying-in-state together, and *together* means always the comte de Crillon. But what are mine alone, are some excellent pineapples, and a four-page letter on the present state of affairs, on the glory with which the Prince de Conti has covered himself, on her daughter-in-law, and then certain compliments very flattering to me, in short some day I shall make you die of jealousy by reading it all to you. But before then, you will have shown off so much, been so pleasing and fascinating that all my successes will go for nothing, and I shall have to become Cinderella again. But really I do not want to forget the important fact: that people have spoken so urgently to M. Turgot about the business in which you are interested, that at last he burst out laughing and said: "This is at least the tenth time I have been spoken to about M. de Guibert; assuredly I have been neither forgetful nor neglectful." That is all I know about it. Yesterday I wrote to him as Comptroller-General and told him again to let me know if I ought to address myself to M. de Sartine in the matter in which M. de Guibert was interested. I await his answer. My friend, if it was a question of getting you released from the Bastille, I should not have been more pressing, and *hardly* more interested.

You can well imagine that during all this Saint

Bartholomew's Day of ministers, no more has been heard of that letter of the theologian. Voltaire has written to everybody about it; he has praised it, as he praised himself in M. de Schomberg's verses, and besides, he is in mortal terror: this makes him utter a hundred impertinences duller and more absurd than anyone could express. Heavens, what a pity it is that so much wit, talent, even genius, should be spoiled by such pettiness and baseness. Truly M. d'Alembert is our first man of letters: he is in every respect an honour to them.

My friend, why did you not write to me from Chanteloup? Had you already nothing more to say to me? The post leaves every day, and besides, what does it matter if the letter stays in the post, one is not deprived for a century of the pleasure of talking to the person who loves one; notice that I dare not say, *whom one loves*. If you reached Bordeaux on Tuesday after the post had gone, I shall have to wait till Wednesday; and that is putting me in Purgatory, after having placed me in Hell for a fortnight.

If you receive this letter at Bordeaux, as I do not doubt you will, I change my mind and ask you to go and see the Consul; perhaps I may learn some fresh details; I shall know, in particular, if he was charged to send back a kind of safe in which my letters were locked up; perhaps he will tell you that he saw certain papers burned: in a word, he will speak to you of the most lovable, the most fascinating of men whom I ought to have loved single-heartedly, and whom I should never have offended, if, in spite of a destiny which I loathe, I could escape any sort of misery. There is not one which I have not experienced.

Some day, my friend, I will tell you such things as are not to be found in the romances of Prévost or of Richardson: my story is a mosaic of circumstances so

deadly, so atrocious, that it has proved to me that truth is often stranger than fiction. The heroines of a novel have little to say about their education; the strangeness of mine would deserve to be written down. Some evening, this winter, when we are very sad, given up to our thoughts, I will give you the amusement of hearing a story which would interest you if you found it in a book, but which will fill you with a great horror of the human race. How cruel men are! Tigers are kindly compared with them. I ought, in nature, to devote my life to hatred; I have ill fulfilled my destiny; I have loved much and hated little. Heavens, my friend, I feel a hundred years old; this life of mine which seems so uniform, so monotonous, has been a prey to every misfortune, and the target of every ugly passion which can animate the dishonourable. But whither am I wandering? Belonging utterly to you whom I love, to you who sustain and guard my life, why do I cast my eyes on all those objects which have made me detest it?

I shall not seal my letter till after the postman has come. How delighted I shall be if he brings me a letter from you! But you will have arrived too late; you are never punctual; what you do not see hardly exists for you. In a word, you are exactly what is needed to torment a sensitive mind, and as for me I am exactly what is needed to prove that folly does not exclude imbecility. Just think! I spoke to you as if it was Saturday; I am expecting the postman who will not come until to-morrow, and it is not your fault, my friend: it is not mine either if my head is in a whirl, if the need of consolation which I feel makes me lose the measure and order of time. Alas, I do not know whether it would not have been better not to have known you, not to have loved you. Then for three months past I should have been as if I had lived

a hundred years ago; I should not be suffering, I should need neither you nor your letters. But are you not tired to death by the length of this? My friend, accustom yourself to my importunity.

Letter 52

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Bordeaux, Thursday morning, August 1774.

Here I am once more. I come to answer all the unimportant matters which fill two pages of your letter, and for which I thank you all the same.

All the news has been received here with the greatest delight. I am overjoyed that M. Turgot is in the Council and Comptroller-General, for I am not piqued at his failure to answer my letter. All the better if he has done something for that unfortunate officer: you know the source of my interest in him, and I thank you for the interest M. Turgot has expressed to you. I was wrong to include among unimportant matters one detail, and I withdraw it: I mean, M. d'Alembert. I was sure the *Eulogy of Despréaux* would be a success. You are indeed right; he is the foremost of our philosophers, the foremost of our men of letters, because he alone possesses, in addition to genius, a constancy of principles, a practical philosophy, a disinterestedness, a loftiness of thought, a goodness of disposition, such as I have met in no one else.

No doubt it is because I find in Voltaire none of these virtues that I cannot admire him enthusiastically. The profound contempt which I have for his mind is the reason of my secret inclination sometimes not even to do justice to his talents. But what is this you tell me about that *Letter of a Theologian*? Why is

Voltaire in mortal terror? Is he afraid they will attribute it to him? His vanity might well accept the gift.

In truth, I believe I am decidedly in Mme de Boufflers' bad books, I am writing to her by this post: I am speaking to her about the triumph, the fame, of the Prince de Conti. I am writing to her, and perhaps I shall not do so again till my return, for I feel no need or attraction to draw me to her.

My dearest love to the comte de Crillon. My compliments to M. de Vaines and to the people you meet who are good enough to remember me; to M. le comte d'Anlezi, to M. de Saint-Chamans whom you will soon see again, and to the chevalier de Chastellux. You no doubt have the duchesse de Chatillon at your side at this moment; she is very fond of you, and that makes me want her to be so good as to preserve some memory of me. But chief of all is the message you will give M. d'Alembert; I embrace him with all my heart.

I am cross about that *Life of Catinat*. It may compel me to make some alterations. It will deprive my *Eulogy* of the piquancy of novelty. There was nothing written about him.

I am busy with the *Gracchi* as far as my wretched head is capable of it. I am beginning the second act, and am thoroughly pleased with the first. The subject offers me a wealth of material. There are ideas in it which will turn your head. See how confidently I talk to you! It would be stupidity, if I were not writing to *you*.

I shall be here three or four days more. I reckoned on leaving to-day; but the duchesse de Grammont is coming to dinner on Monday. She is staying with my relations; they insisted on my remaining. So I shall stay till Tuesday morning. I shall reach my father's

on Wednesday at latest. I hope I shall find news of you there.

Good-bye, my friend. The post is going, and I must hurry. I love you. Through all my folly and my inconsistency, I feel really and truly that my heart has no more intimate or lively bond.

By Languedoc, that saves a day.

Letter 53

to M. de Guibert

Saturday evening, 27 August, 1774.

My friend, I have had no news of you. I told myself a hundred times: he will have arrived too late, he will not have thought of the value of an hour to me, it makes four days' difference: so I am put off till Wednesday. Ah well, the care I took to let my heart build no hopes on this, availed me nothing: the post came in. I had three letters which I could not read, because yours was missing. Heavens, you are neither so fortunate nor so unfortunate as to experience such a feeling. My friend, if I do not hear from you on Wednesday, I shall write to you no more. You are already in the wrong once, twice, you may be a thousand times, but I declare to you that I will not forgive you, and I shall not love you the less. You can see that what I am saying is impossible: the logic of the heart is absurd. In God's name, take care that I never reason more accurately.

How you are missed at this moment! There is general intoxication, my friend. There is this difference between my disposition and that of all the people I see: they are in transports of joy at the happiness they hope for, while I can only draw a breath of relief

at the misfortunes from which we are delivered. Heavens, my mind does not reach as far as joy, it is filled by lacerating regrets and memories, it is animated by an emotion which troubles it, often disturbs it violently, and very rarely gives it promise of any pleasure. When one is in such a condition, one can only feel popular joy by thought and reflection, and reasonable pleasures are so moderate! My friends are displeased because they cannot make me enthusiastic: I am very sorry, I tell them, but I no longer have the strength to be very delighted. Still I am very glad that M. Turgot has already dismissed one swindler: the Chancellor of the corn supplies, M. de Saint-Prix; he has built himself a flaunting mansion, with the stones of which he deserves to be pelted. My friend, I must tell you the fishwives' compliment to the King, on St. Louis's day: "Sire, I come to compliment your Majesty on your hunting of yesterday: never did your grandfather make such good hunting." But read, read at once the first scene in the third act of *Esther*, between Haman and his wife; towards the middle you will find a dialogue between the Chancellor and his confidant Lebrun, which might have been written for the purpose. The comte de Crillon, who is at Montigny, has written me a patriotic hymn, three pages of transports; it is a great deal. How happy they are! Hope keeps them young. Alas, how old one is when one has lost it, or when only just enough is left to fend off despair.

Tell me if you have written much poetry, if you are getting into the way of hastening slowly, if you will resolve to do as Racine did and write verse with difficulty.

My friend, I impose on you the pleasure of reading and re-reading every morning a scene of that divine music, and then you will go for a walk, will compose

poetry, and with the talent for deep thought and feeling which nature has given you, I answer for it you will write some very fine lines. But what am I thinking of! Advising, and *whom*? A man who has a great contempt for my taste, who considers me rather stupid, who has never seen me moderate in anything, and who, judging me thus, might well be no more than moderate, and show as much justness of views as justice.

Good-bye, my friend; if you loved me, I should not be so modest, I should think there was nothing in nature to envy. I wrote you yesterday a volume, to Bordeaux. The word is dreadful to me; it touches a painful and sensitive chord in my heart. Good-bye, good-bye.

Letter 54

TO M. DE GUIBERT, COLONEL OF THE CORSICAN LEGION, AT MONTAUBAN-EN-QUERCY

Monday, 29 August, 1774.

You know that M. Turgot is Comptroller-General but you do not know about the conversation between him and the King on the subject. He had made some difficulties about accepting the Comptrollership, when M. de Maurepas at the King's bidding proposed it to him. When he went to thank the King, the latter said to him: "So you did not want to be Comptroller-General?" "Sire," said M. Turgot, "I confess to Your Majesty that I should have preferred the Admiralty, because it is a more secure position, and one in which I was more certain to do good; but at this crisis it is not to the King that I give myself, but to the man of honour." The King took both his hands

and said : " You shall not be deceived." M. Turgot added : " Sire, I must represent to Your Majesty the necessity for economy, and Your Majesty ought yourself to give the first example of it. Doubtless M. l'abbé Terray has already told Your Majesty so." " Yes," replied the King, " he has told me so, but not as you have." And all this is just as if you had heard it, for M. Turgot adds not a word to the truth. This emotional feeling on the part of the King is the basis of all M. Turgot's hopes ; and I think you would be as hopeful as he is. M. de Vaines has M. Leclerc's place, but he will not have the same luxury : no gambling, no valets, no audiences, in a word the very greatest simplicity, that is to say, just what M. Turgot likes. Yes, I repeat, you are much missed here. You would have shared the enthusiasm. One begins to need silence in order to reflect and think of all the benefits one expects. And, besides, there is the personal interest, which must be counted for something.

The chevalier d'Aguesseau has just satisfied and at the same time given a blow to mine. He knows you have been twenty-four hours at Chanteloup, that you are well, and that you reached Bordeaux on the 22nd. According to that, it is perfectly easy for your friends to have had news of you on Saturday the 27th. I do not complain of the preference you have shown them ; but, my friend, it would be pleasant to me to have to praise you, and to thank you for a thoughtfulness which I should have so deeply appreciated, and which my heart needed. Good-bye, here are three letters in a very little time ; if I have none from you on Wednesday, I think I shall be able to keep silence. All my friends have asked me with great interest for news of you, and especially M. d'Alembert.

I think I did not tell you of the success which the chevalier de Chastellux gained during a four days'

visit he made to Villers-Cotterets. He gave six readings: he had only four compositions, but read two of them twice. He thinks the *Pretentions* were not appreciated. So I scolded the Archbishop of Toulouse who was one of the audience. If you knew the way in which he justified himself, you would die of laughing. The Chevalier told me of his success with great naïvety; I was delighted by it, but worried because he looks so ill; I think his health is in serious danger. M. Watelet is rather bad with consumption; he is having asses' milk.

I am in very poor health just now, but that is almost my usual state; when evils last long one is deprived even of the consolation of complaining of them. Good-bye, again.

Can I not have told you that I have heard Millico sing? He is an Italian. Never, never has anyone sung to perfection with such sensitiveness and expressiveness. What tears he made us shed! What trouble he brought to our minds! I was completely upset; never has anything left with me a deeper, a more genuine, nay, a more lacerating impression; but I should have liked to go on listening till I died of it. Oh, how far preferable would such a death have been to life.

Letter 55

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE, RUE SAINT DOMINIQUE, VIS-Á-VIS BELLECHASSE, FAUBOURG SAINT-GERMAIN

Bordeaux, Saturday, 27 August, 1774.

So I must no more expect anything from you, not even what is due from friendship and common honesty.

I wrote to you from Chartres and from Rochambeau. I wrote from the bottom of my heart, and it was

certainly full of regret at our separation. You have sent me here a cold, harsh letter such as one writes to a man with whom one wishes to break off all relations. There have been two posts since, and you have not even given any sign of life. I have waited until to-day's post to see if you would put the finishing touch to your injustice; you have done so.

I have by me a long letter which I wrote during the last few days, and in which you would see whether you are, in fact, indifferent to me, whether I am, as you suspect, the most false and dishonourable of men; I shall not send it you. It would not be answered and perhaps would only embitter you. Your state of mind towards me is such that I must expect nothing from it but offence and injustice.

When you are willing calmly to recall my whole conduct, you will see that I am neither so *false* nor so *dishonourable* as you are pleased to suppose me. I was attracted towards you, and at the same time, I did not conceal from you the feeling which bound me and led me back in spite of myself to another object. You have seen my struggles, my regrets, my bitter indecision. My wretched position has often forced me into reticences, lies, if you like to call them so, but their reason has never been anything but delicacy and my affection for you. I should have thought I deserved your indulgence, and not that I should be an object of *horror* to you. So your last letter contains expressions which have been bound to revolt me. But I am still more sensible to your silence, to the indifference, the hatred, the contempt, to which you seem to want us to give ourselves up. I do not reckon on having news of you at Montauban any more than I have had here—I shall leave on Wednesday, after the post, to go there. I am experiencing what I had so often, so sadly, foreseen: you are ending by hating me. My consolation

would be not to have deserved it, if the affection I still feel for you left me capable of tasting consolation.

Letter 56

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Bordeaux, Wednesday, 31 August, 1774.

A letter from you, my friend! I did not expect another. The very address, in M. d'Alembert's hand made me think it was he who was writing to me. I was mistaken. I thank you with all my heart; in my turn I beg forgiveness. I have done you an injury: by the last post I wrote you a most harsh, perhaps a most harmful, letter; but no, it was not meant to be so, I was more distressed than wounded, and affection preserves even in reproach an accent of sensibility which can never offend.

I did not look out for a letter from you, and yet I did. It was a mixture of opposite emotions and hopes such as you well know. Letters are delivered here at eight in the morning, and from five o'clock on I was counting them. They came, and judge what were my feelings: there was not one from you.

I was in despair, overwhelmed. I hated you, and then I pitied you; I imagined that you had not wanted to write to me at Bordeaux, that your letters perhaps awaited me at Montauban. I was angry at having had to prolong my stay here. A moment after, I found that the delicacy which would make you take such a resolution was very strange, quite the contrary of all your behaviour towards me. Above all, I thought it very cold, very unimpassioned. Anyway, there it was. I judged you, condemned you for life, by that. Still I

wanted to write to you again ; I had decided to do so, and I do not know what I should have said to you.

It was eleven o'clock : they brought me a letter which had been left in the bag—and that letter was yours—Ah, my friend, how it touched me, how deeply it touched me ! How angry I am for causing you so much pain. I have pained you ; I make no attempt to justify myself.

I concealed from you the fact that madame de M . . . had left on the Saturday evening for La Bretèche, and that I had seen her. In fact, she left at nine o'clock that evening. I stayed with her till then, and, as you rightly guessed, I did not want to go to you when I left her ; I went to my own house. I had parted from her with tenderness, and the emotion came from her. Her eyes had been wet with tears. It was now nothing more than friendship, she said, which so disturbed her, but a lively, a tender, friendship, of such a sort that it would be a mortal blow to her if I could ever forget her, and she was afraid I was well on the way to do so : she reproached me with so many relationships which separated me from her, and mentioned ours. I returned to my house distressed by this parting, incapable of going to you, incapable of any company but my own. I spent part of the night in examining myself, and not being able to understand myself, in feeling that I was not cured, and yet that you were dear to me.

I went the next morning to your house, determined to confess to you how I had spent the evening ; I saw you, and you took up all my thoughts ; I had not the strength to speak to you. I was full only of regrets at leaving you, and of the affection which you inspire in me. I left, and thought that at Chartres I should have more strength ; but I had not. Such are my crimes, such is my lie.

Oh, believe that it cost me much to tell it. I was not born to lie. But what a labyrinth is my heart! What a wretched maze! How can I make you traverse it? How am I to give you the clue? It even escapes me time after time. Notice, my friend that the lies in which you have sometimes found me out are never those of a heart habituated to them. They are almost always reticences rather than lies, or else they are told with such maladroitness and such embarrassment that my expression and the depths of my thought make instant reparation to the truth. Oh, if you only knew how I hate myself when I am in the wrong towards you. How it weighs on my mind! How much I should like my heart to be free enough, pure enough, consistent enough, to show itself to you at every hour, every moment!

Oh, ye gods, are there not between your position and mine resemblances which must rouse your indulgence? You love me, and your mind is full of M. de Mora. If I asked you to give up remembering him, it would be your death-warrant.

My friend, we are, both of us, strange examples of the activity of the human heart. Your letter touched me—moved me even to tears, and the moment before I had just shed tears, on what an object, good God, on a . . .[1]

Letter 57

TO M. LE COMTE DE GUIBERT[2]

Saturday morning, 3 September, 1774.

Certainly it is not that *harsh* and *cold* page to which you reply, that I reproach myself with; it was the

[1] The remainder of the letter is missing. [V-G.]

[2] Unpublished. [V-G.]

accurate expression of the feelings which then animated me, and which will, I hope, never more leave me. What I do reproach myself with, what I detest, what makes me contemptible in my own eyes, is the excessive weakness which drew me again towards you. I said I loved you, I found pleasure in saying it ; how dreadful a poison ! Wretched creature that I am, I am condemned to lament and to look only with horror on the time which has passed since the moment that I saw you for the first time. Indeed, but for you, I should not have known the most cruel of tortures : remorse. But for you, perhaps, I should not be condemned to shed tears of blood over the memory of a friend whose last days I must ever reproach myself with having filled with anxiety. The poison which you poured into my heart, I transferred to his. For the first time he knew doubt : he passed from uneasiness to fear ; his letters, like his heart, were full of anxiety and grief. And it was you who did the most cruel wrong to the most virtuous of men, to one who most deserved to be loved. Oh ! how far beyond the boundaries of virtue, and even of personal interest, you have made me wander ! Yes, I remember, I had dared to form the loathsome plan, I had resolved to bring death to the bosom of my friend, to abandon him, to give up loving him as he wished to be loved, as he deserved to be loved ! And what, good Heavens what was the object of this sacrifice ? A man who was never really mine, and who is cruel enough, and dishonourable enough, to tell me that he made me his victim without loving me ! After having betrayed the truth, after deceiving me a thousand times, he takes a barbarous pleasure in telling me a truth which abases me and drives me to despair. Heavens, is there then no vengeance ? Must I be confined only to hatred and to death ! Have you then had the power of

keeping me alive only to make me feel all the more acutely the full horror of it? I was dying because of M. de Mora, and you have made me live for you: my crime was expiated if I did not survive him, but yours was not complete: you had to fill the cup of my misery to overflowing. Well, you can be content, nothing is now lacking: I have made miserable a man who lived only for me; he risked his life, he tore himself away from a family, from friends, who adored him; he came, he said, to warm again a heart which absence had made cold, to give life once more to a mind which misfortune had laid low, and this design gave him the strength to reach Bordeaux, and die. And it was I, or rather you, who pronounced his sentence. I cannot hide it from myself: your presence, the need I felt of loving you distracted me from that dreadful truth; I carried it in the recesses of my heart, and often my heart was torn by it; but I saw you, I loved you, I deceived myself about you; I hoped no more either for rest or for happiness, but every time I saw you I found pleasure in it, and that charm softened the bitterness of my regrets, and appeased the cries of my conscience. This state of mind was destined very soon to vanish; it was part of an illusion which I felt escaped me even as I delighted in it. To justify myself in my own eyes, I had had to assure myself that if I had been drawn to you by your charm, I should be attached to you by your nobility of character, by your virtue. By modelling you after this fashion, I was still weak and faithless, but I was less guilty, and the only misfortune left me was that caused by an irreparable loss; my self-reproaches were to be stilled by your affection.

Such is the vanity which for three months has been my stay and my defence. You have been unwilling to let me keep it; you were eager to get back that

portion of your liberty which you had sacrificed to the need of deceiving me; all my affection did not make up for the labour you had undertaken; at no matter what price, you were determined to enlighten me, and while you reduce me to the depths of misery, while you leave me no resource but despair, you say that I owe you *indulgence*; you boast of the *delicacy* of your feelings which made you deceive me and lie to me from morning till evening! Oh, God, how cruel it is to me to hear a justification which is an additional outrage to me. The passion which you declare leads you back always to an object which so little reciprocates it, that passion which is so strong, so beyond your control, has still let you assure someone that you were no longer in love with that woman, and that your heart was so free, so disengaged from any affection, that your most earnest wish at the moment was to marry? How do you reconcile all this? Is it only inconstancy, or does it not border on deceit? I am not trying to spare your feelings; I want at least to taste the satisfaction of telling you my whole thought; I have nothing to lose in your direction, and besides I do not want to keep anything. So, I imagine the worst. I see it, I believe it, and I am strong enough to endure it. So lose this letter, as is your custom, or keep it, if you prefer it, to read to that object which is so dear to you and towards which your conduct is so delicate. In a word, make whatever use you like of what I am saying to you. I could not any longer have anything more to fear from you. You were only really dangerous to me when I could believe you a man of feeling and virtue. Good-bye, if one day I can cost you a regret, and make you know remorse, I shall be avenged.

Letter 58

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

(*Château de Fontneuve, near Montauban*),

Friday morning, 9 September, 1774.

My friend, you will have found my yesterday's letter very clouded, very sad. Such indeed have been my thoughts since leaving Paris. I can entertain none but afflicting reflections. I am discontented with myself with my lot, with the future which lies before me. A thousand petty worries obsess me. The pleasure of being once more in the bosom of my family has been terribly poisoned.

First of all at Bordeaux I saw my little niece, the daughter of my unfortunate sister. The fate of that child has touched me deeply. She is at present staying with an aunt who takes care of her, who will take care of her so long as she can. But the aunt is getting old. If her husband, who is still older, dies, she will be herself destitute; and then how pitiful the fate of the child! A convent will be her only refuge.

That is not all: the child has a brother who is nearly twelve years old; I should like to finish his education, which is detestable, as all education is in the provinces; afterwards I should like to put him into the Army. For that, my means would have to be sufficient to allow me to help him, and they will not. So my heart is wearied by beneficent schemes which it cannot carry out. Then I get here; I find my father threatened by an event which would ruin him. The country seat where he lives, and where I now am, is a leasehold worth some twelve thousand francs a year, and this is his whole fortune. Part of this leasehold is Crown property, and his father had held it as tenant

for fifty or sixty years. Now comes an edict of that scoundrel the abbé Terray by which all crown lands are to revert, on re-payment of the original price of the lease, a very inconsiderable sum. If M. Turgot allows this edict to stand, if it is rigorously enforced, my father will lose firstly all the manorial rights of this place, and, besides, three or four thousand francs a year in dues that are paid, which would be the equivalent of more than a hundred thousand francs, and would be the ruin of his moderate fortune.

Add to this the fact that I have a mother and two sisters; that the easy circumstances of my family are dependent on the King's beneficence, which may cease at any moment on my father's death, or by cessation of payment; that I have certain debts, not indeed of great importance, but still too burdensome for one who is not rich; that staying in Paris increases them little by little every year, and that none the less my affections draw me to live only in Paris; that if I am to carry out my plan of work, I need to travel still more, and am in no position to dream of that; that I can have no more hopes from the government, because my pride would let me die rather than beg a favour; and that in short, in circumstances like these from which nothing can extricate me, I have no alternative but to bury myself in the provinces, far from all the objects of affection and study to which my life was attached. Enter into all these reflections, my friend, and consider whether it is remarkable that my mind should be sad and anxious. In my perplexity as to the future which I foresee, marriage is perhaps the only means of escaping my debts, of strengthening the fortunes of my family, of gaining the power to be of some help to it. Various quite considerable proposals have already been made to my father in the country. I have refused them all. I would rather kill myself than

live in the provinces. I cannot find there a single heart, a single intelligence to my taste. You, and all your surroundings, have spoiled me for life; but *you* my friend, above all. Oh, you cannot sufficiently realise how completely your friendship, and your company, have become the chief blessings of my heart, how incapable I now am of doing without them. I can find reasons for being separated from you for three months, or six; but I always want to come back to you and be at your side.

Only one other person has a share in the feelings which draw me to Paris. Oh! is it for you to be displeased with me because I cannot entirely detach myself from one whom I used to love. . . . I find pleasure and attraction in seeing her. Does not your heart too find room for two affections? Am I unjust enough to think that you do not love me, because you have other affections? Do I make any claim to tear out of your heart everything that has not to do with me? What I should be revolted at, my friend, would be a feeling which you kept a mystery from me; a feeling which would make it impossible for me any longer to count on you, to trust myself to you; and such is most certainly not the kind of feeling which I still have for madame de M . . . It does not harm you; it does not betray you; it does not deceive you. It is of quite a different kind from the affection which attaches me to you. It is neither love, nor friendship; it is mere attraction, in a word, habit. Why do you everlastingly compel me to analyse my feelings? Why do you torture me? I love you, ought not that to be enough for you?

This explanation has led me away for a moment from the wretched details about which I was telling you. I return to them. You will ask me why these thoughts did not occupy me while I was in Paris as

they do here: I was distracted, taken out of myself, enchanted. I had no feeling but for my pleasure. Here, left to myself, isolated, brought into close touch with all the petty domestic calculations, I cannot help being disturbed about my destiny and that of my family. In any case I must drown my troubles again this year. I shall go to Paris this winter; I am making my father promise to go too. Together we will make a plea against this reversion of Crown lands which ruins us. Perhaps M. de Muy will do something for him.

What an inconceivable charm! Hope, courage come back to me when I think that I shall see you again. That will be at least life for another winter. Ah! my friend, after all these details, after the pouring out of my most secret worries, can you still doubt that I count on you? To whom does one open one's heart so freely? Not to the one whom one loves most violently; other titles are needed to establish confidence; virtues are necessary, sensibility, kindliness, all that I have found in you. I await your news constantly; I shall finish my letter after receiving yours.

Like you, I have only very slightly shared in the public delight. I have feelings which touch me far more nearly, and which repel everything that is not connected with them. One must be happy, one's mind must be calm, if one is to give oneself to the practice of certain virtues. How can one rejoice in the public benefit when one is obsessed with private misfortunes? Still, my congratulations, and kind remembrances, I beg you, to M. de Vaines; he is indeed the right man for M. Turgot. I wanted to write to M. d'Alembert; I wanted to write to the comte de Crillon, but I have no strength to do anything. I have much difficulty in working over, here

and there, several pieces with which I am not pleased. I read much, I go for walks ; it is an outlet.

Till to-morrow, my friend. Letters come at eight o'clock, and I shall be at the end of the avenue to await them.

Letter 59

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Fonteneuve, Saturday, 10 *September,* 1774.

Your letter astonishes and overwhelms me. I was hoping for one which would bring some consolation and pleasure to my heart. You outrage my feelings with unexampled harshness. You speak of hatred, and in truth your letter breathes it. I have never, you say, been a man either of feeling or of virtue ; I am false ; I have deceived you.

If I ever see you again, if your injustice does not end by bringing about an eternal separation between us, how you will blush when you read your letter again ! I am not burning it ; I shall not *lose it, as is my custom.* I shall keep it ; not to show to that *object so dear to me,* and towards whom my *conduct is so delicate,* but to show it to you, to you who were dear to me, who must be so no longer, and whose conduct towards me is so far from delicate. It is the comte de Crillon who told you of my conversation with him about madame de M . . . He asked me whether I was still in love with her, and as I have never been intimate with him, did I owe him an account of my feelings ? Was I bound to show my heart to him ? What a moment you choose to treat me so unworthily ! The very moment when my soul more than ever sought to draw close to yours, and when I counted more than ever on your friendship.

Good-bye; you make me know *regret* but not *remorse*. No doubt this is the last time you will write to me. Indeed, if you are going to insult me, to tell me that you hate me, you had better give me up entirely. I shall enquire of your friends for news of your health.

Letter 60

TO M. DE GUIBERT

Thursday, 15 *September*, 1774.

Perhaps you will never read what I am going to write to you; perhaps, again, you will receive it at once: it is, I think, the answer which I expect on Saturday which will decide me either to burn, or to send you this letter. Listen to me: it seems to me that all the passions of my soul are still; it has gone back, it is restored to its first, its only, object. Yes, my friend, I am not deceived: my memories, even my regrets, are dearer to me, more intimate, and more sacred than the violent feeling I have had for you, and the desire I had to see you share it. I have reflected; I have withdrawn into myself, I have judged myself, and you too; but I have pronounced sentence only against myself; I have perceived that I was aiming at the impossible; to be loved by you. By an unheard-of good-fortune, which never ought to have happened, the tenderest, the most perfect, the most charming creature whoever existed had given himself to me, had abandoned his soul, his thoughts, his whole existence, to me However unworthy I was of the choice and the gift he had made, I enjoyed it with astonishment, with transport. When I spoke to him of the immense distance nature had set between us, I distressed his heart, and he soon

persuaded me that everything was equal between us, because I loved him. No, never could beauty, charm, youth, virtue, merit have been flattered and exalted to such an extent as my vanity might have been by M. de Mora; but he saw into my heart, he saw the passion which filled it, and cast from him the thought of the pleasures of vanity.

I tell you all this, my friend, not from a weakness which would be too stupid, and too unworthy of the regrets which tear my heart, but in order to justify myself before you; yes, to justify myself. I have been guilty, I have given myself to you. I have loved you with transport, and even that ought not to justify in your eyes the desire I had dared to form that I might see you share my feelings. My aim must have seemed mad to you. What, *I*, fix the attentions of a man of your age, who unites with every lovable quality the talents and the wit which must make him an object of preference to all the women who have most right to please, seduce and attach! My friend, I am filled with confusion, when I think how blind, how utterly misled, you must have thought my vanity. Yes, with grief I accuse myself; the liking you inspired in me, the remorse which tortured me, the passion which animated M. de Mora, all these things together have led me into an error which I detest; for I must confess it, my thoughts went still farther; I was persuaded that you could love me, and this mad, this vain, persuasion hurried me on into the abyss. No doubt, it is very late, too late, to realise my error: I detest it, and while I despise myself, I ought to hate you. Indeed, you had roused that horrible feeling in me. I have even written to you in that disposition: it was the last effect, the last struggle, of the passion which disturbed me.

I am far from claiming any merit for the calmness to

which I have returned ; that too is a gift from the man whom I adored. I shall not explain to you all that has happened in me during the last fortnight, but it is enough to tell you that I no longer recognise myself. No longer do thoughts of you occupy me, and if remorse was not allied so nearly to my grief, I think you would be very far from me ; not that I shall ever cease to feel friendship for you ; but it will be a moderated sentiment which may, if you respond to it, let me taste some pleasant moments, while it never worries or torments my mind. Oh ! Of what horrors my mind has been full ! It seems a miracle that I did not succumb to the despair to which I was reduced. My friend, I should make you shudder if I told you what I have attempted, and what deadly aid my wretched destiny employed to compel me still to breathe. But I repent of nothing ; the shock, while it has reduced my mechanism to feebleness, has given fresh strength to my mind ; my mind is still sensitive, but it is passionless ; I no longer know either hatred or vengeance, or . . . Heavens ! What a word I was going to utter. It is henceforward bound up, in my thoughts, with nothing but the memory of M. de Mora. Alas ! I shall still owe to him the most consoling and sweetest emotions of my heart : regrets and tears.

All the details you have sent me have been inundated with tears ; I thank you for them, I owed you a sensation which I prefer to the pleasure which would not come from thoughts of M. de Mora.

I have read, and re-read, your letters, those from Bordeaux, and from Montauban on the 8th. I sincerely pity you for being so disturbed and tormented without having any absolute reason for it ; but at the same time, vague griefs are only temporary, at least I hope so, for with all my heart I desire your repose and your happiness. I was incapable of disturbing either

the one or the other, but your honesty perhaps made you suffer for the harm you did me. I forgive you from the bottom of my heart; remember it; never speak to me of it, and let me believe that you have found my unhappiness even greater than my guilt. Oh! you are not bound to believe me, and I have lost the right to persuade you, but I might almost dare to say, with Jean-Jacques: "My mind was never made to be abased." The strongest, the purest, passion has too long animated it; the man who was its object was too virtuous, had too noble, too lofty a mind, to have wished to reign in mine if it had been vile and despicable: his liking, his passion, for me, raised me to his level. Heavens, how far I have fallen! My misfortune is horrible; he would have shared it; he died for me; my grief would have made him live. Oh, my friend, if in the abode of the dead you can hear me, be sensible of my grief, of my repentance! I have been guilty, I have done you an injury, but has not my despair expiated my crime? I have lost you, and I live, yes, I live; is not that punishment enough?

Forgive me the emotion which has drawn me towards the object which I should like to follow. Good-bye. If I have news of you on Saturday, I shall add a line to this; but I forgive you beforehand all the insults you may have offered me, and I abjure, with all the strength and reason I have left, everything which I wrote to you in the convulsions of despair.

To-day I place in your hands my profession of faith: I promise, I engage, not to demand, or expect, anything more from you. If you still feel friendly towards me, I shall enjoy it in peace and gratitude, and if you were to find me unworthy of that, I should be distressed but should not think you unjust. Good-bye, my friend; it is friendship that utters that word; it is only the dearer to my heart, now that it can no more disturb it.

Saturday, 11.0 *p.m.*

Here is your answer; it is as I should have wished: cold and temperate. My friend, we are going to agree, my mind is in tune with yours. That letter has not offended you; you have surely judged it with marvellous accuracy. You have had over me the advantage of a reasonable man over a passionate creature: you were cool, and I was delirious; but it was the final crisis of a terrible illness, of which it would be better to die than be cured, because the violence of the accesses of the fever crushes and lays low the strength of the wretched patient, to such an extent that he can no longer promise himself any pleasure from a state of convalescence. But that is enough, no doubt too much, on what you call *my injustice*, and your *honesty*.

My friend, do you know one thing that is honest? It is that you did not suppress the six or seven pages which you had written to me before you received my letter of September 4. How far superior is reason to passion! How well it regulates conduct! It brings peace and sheds it on everything; in a word, it keeps to the mean so well that I must thank you to-day both for what you say to me, and what you do not say.

My friend, your letter of Friday is amiable, it is gentle, obliging, reasonable, it has the tone and the charm of confidence; but it is gloomy, and I am sorry that such is the disposition of your mind. I have nothing in me wherewith to distract you; I have not even the strength to talk to you this evening; I am too poorly. If I can, I will answer your letter by Tuesday's post. Good-bye. Don't you expect news of me any more?

Letter 61

TO M. DE GUIBERT

Monday evening, 19 *September*, 1774.

I WANT to write to you. I should like to answer you. If I miss to-morrow's post, I shall have to wait till Saturday, and yet my mind is dead. I have just read your letter again; I thought it would give me life, but not at all: I feel horribly barren, and if I gave in, this would be my answer to you: all your reflections on your present position are very reasonable, but if you are thinking of the future you have even better grounds for finding in it subjects for hope than reasons for fear. It seems to me that never have people of merit had a better chance, and if they have virtue, intelligence and talent they may aspire to anything. So this is not a time to be discouraged, but much rather to come confidently, not to ask favours, but to make yourself known and get justice done you.

As for the upset in the Royal Domains, I have much difficulty in believing that M. Turgot can in any way follow up or put into execution the plans of M. l'abbé Terray. If however by some impossible chance he were to want to act according to that plan, M. de Vaines would be in a position to be of service to you, not himself directly, but through his influence with MM. Boutin and de Beaumont, Intendants of Finance, in whose departments the Domains are. M. de Vaines would do everything possible and impossible to oblige you: he is particularly attracted to you: he never sees me without asking for news of you. On the day of your departure, I had a note from him in which were these words: "I beg you to let me hear news of you and of M. de Guibert, who is an object of much interest to those who love an ardent and frank mind which in

every way is eager in pursuit of fame."[1] I wanted to send them to you; but then I was prevented by an interest which does not leave room for chatter. You ought to write to M. de Vaines, not to congratulate him on his good fortune—for it is just the opposite; he has sacrificed his interests to his friendship for M. Turgot, and to his love for the common weal; in a word, he has been carried away by the desire to help in the good work, his virtue has driven him into action; but when he became a little calmer, he realised that he had undertaken a terribly heavy task.

I do not oppose your plans for the future: it does not exist for me; from this you can easily understand that I cannot raise myself to the height of foresight or fear for others. Generally speaking, I think you will do well not to marry in the provinces. Still, that would be a method of settling all your uncertainties; but also it would be a misfortune which would deprive you of that greatest of blessings, hope. But, my friend, I cannot imagine how it is that you have not the strength to endure ill-fortune; Paris is the one place in the world where one can be poor with the least privation: only bores and fools need wealth. You can see perfectly well that it is folly to think that in order to write a good book you must travel round the world. Begin it at any rate, and before it is finished perhaps you will be rich enough to travel. In a word I should like you to consider lack of means as an obstacle only and not a misfortune. My friend, if I was looking down from the moon, I should prefer your talents to the wealth of M. Beaujon; I would rather have a taste for study than the post of Master-of-the-Horse to France. In a word, if I were condemned to live and could not choose the lot of a good

[1] This passage in M. de Vaines' writing, and cut out of his letter, is pasted into the autograph letter of Mlle de Lespinasse. [V-G.]

Norman farmer, I should ask to have the wit and talent of M. de Guibert; but, in truth, I should like to be allowed to make more use of them.

What you say about your sister's children is full of interest and does you honour, but, my friend, there you are again tormenting yourself about the future. They are well off at present, these children: you see what they have to lose, and that torments you; perhaps they will have the good luck to escape the worries of life; and then, if they are of mediocre intelligence, as there are a thousand chances to one in this world, why should not the daughter be happy in a convent, especially if no force is used to determine her vocation? The little boy's future is far less embarrassing. You know even better than I do that the education of a provincial college is quite as good or quite as bad as that of a Parisian one; and besides, my friend, if one is to join a regiment at sixteen, really it makes not the least difference whether one is educated in Bordeaux or in Paris. How false are our ideas about the prime interest of life, happiness. Good Heavens, is it by sharpening his wits, by increasing his knowledge, that we make an individual happy? Now I fully believe that that may be useful in general; but why must your nephew, who perhaps will not have any brains, be happy in the way that suits you? I feel that I am answering very dryly, very stupidly, all the details into which your friendship and your confidence led you, but what do you want? I can think of nothing, my mind is a desert, my head as empty as a Jack-o-Lanthorn. All I say and hear is quite indifferent to me, and I would say to-day what the man said when they reproached him for not committing suicide since he seemed so detached from life: "I do not kill myself, because I don't care whether I live or die."

Still that is not altogether true, for I am suffering, and death would be a relief; but I have no power of action.

Letter 62

TO THE SAME

Tuesday, 20 *September*, 1774, 6.0 *a.m.*

To make up for the dullness and dryness of my letter of yesterday evening, it has come into my head to send you two short tracts by Voltaire, and the *Eulogy of La Fontaine* which I read with as much pleasure as I derived from hearing it. Note carefully that I do not exaggerate its praises; so you will be still free to form your own opinion and find detestable what I have thought good. In the next few days an edict on the grain-trade of the interior will be published; the reasons for it will be given; a new style, which, I think, should catch the taste of the multitude, for defrauders and party men will still find plenty to criticise.

It was rumoured yesterday that the archbishopric of Cambrai was being given to cardinal Bernis, and that the duc de la Rochefoucauld would go to Rome. Perhaps the abbe de Veri might be nominated to Rome first, but only to get the cardinal's hat, and prepare the work for the duc de la Rochefoucauld. That was yesterday evening's conversation round my fire, and if I named the people who were there, you would agree that if the news is not true, it is at least not absurd. The chevalier de Chastellux whom I see often, but never for more than a moment, has not had the time to ask me for news of you; he is more pleasure-seeking, more busy and runs more after all the princes than ever; he has often spoken of the Duc d'Orleans' *shooting*; he is at La Bretèche to-day; he

will get news of you there; if one has tact and knowledge of the world, one can always get on with, and join in the thoughts of, the people with whom one may be.

M. d'Alembert and the comte de Crillon often speak to me of you; they came to me to hear news of you, and in future I shall have recourse to them, for you will not write to me any more, will you? But, Heavens, how foolish passions are! How silly! For the last fortnight I have felt a great horror of them. But also I must be fair, and admit that while I adore calm and reasonableness, I am hardly alive. I have only just enough strength to feel my annihilation; my mechanism, my mind, my head, the whole *me*, are worn out, and this condition is not too painful to me, though it is novel.

Good-night, my friend, for though it is full day, I have not yet slept. No one has ever thought of writing about sleep and its influence on the mind and the passions.[1] Those who have studied nature ought not to neglect so interesting a part of the life of the unhappy. Alas! if men knew how much loss of sleep can add to one's ills, when they met anyone who was suffering or unhappy, their first question would always be: *do you sleep well?* and the second, *how old are you?*

Letter 63

TO THE SAME

Begun on Thursday, 22 September, 1774.

Call me by every name that perjurers may hear,
Your silence, not your insults, do I fear.

My friend, if I felt passionately, your silence would be the death of me; and if I had only vanity, it would wound me, and I should hate you for it with all my

[1] Mlle de Lespinasse had not read Shakespear as carefully as she read Sterne. [Note of translator.]

might: well, I still live, and I do not hate you. But I will not hide from you that it was with some chagrin, if not with astonishment, that I realised that you were only led on by my feelings: you had to respond to them, now you can no longer find anything to say to me, and when you think my affection has ceased, you feel no regret and you find nothing in yourself which gives you the right to claim back what you have lost. Well, my friend, I am calm enough to be just; I approve your conduct, although it distresses me; I esteem you for putting nothing in the place of the truth. And, indeed, of what would you complain? I have relieved your mind. It is horrible to be the object of an affection which one cannot share: one suffers oneself, and makes the other person unhappy. To love and be loved, is a heavenly joy; when one has known it and lost it, there is nothing left but death. There are two things in nature which do not admit of mediocrity; poetry, and . . .: but I do not deceive myself, the affection which I felt for you was not perfect. At first, I had to reproach myself for it, it cost me remorse; and later, I know not whether my troubled conscience changed my heart, and entirely altered my manner of life and of love, but I was everlastingly agitated by emotions which I used to condemn; I knew jealousy, unrest, distrust; I was everlastingly accusing you; I commanded myself not to complain, but the constraint was dreadful to me. In a word this way of loving was so foreign to my heart, that it became a torment.

For several days I remained unable to get back strength to suffer, or to love, and then at last I recovered that amount of reason which makes one appreciate everything at something like its true value, and makes me feel that if I can no more hope for pleasure, I have very little misery to apprehend. I have recovered

calm, but I am not deceived, it is the calm of death; and in a little time, if I live, I shall be able to say what the man said when he had lived alone for thirty years, and had read nothing but Plutarch: he was asked how he was: "Almoſt as happy as if I was dead." My friend, such is my disposition: nothing I see, or hear, or do, or have to do, can rouse my mind to a momentary intereſt; this kind of life was entirely unknown to me. There is only one thing in the world which does me good, and that is music; but it is a blessing which others would call a pain. I should like to hear ten times a day that tune which tears my heart-ſtrings, and makes me enjoy all that I regret:

"I have loſt my Eurydice," etc.

I go time after time to "*Orpheus*," and alone. On Tuesday again I told my friends I was going to pay some calls, and went and shut myself up in the box you know, where there is *so comfortable a couch*. When I got home in the evening, I found a note from the comte de Crillon, who told me he had had a letter from you the day before, I waited for him the next day, and luckily found him at Mme Geoffrin's. He read me your letter; you speak of me, and return to the subject three times: that is good of you, but colder than if you had not mentioned me. But, my friend, I am glad; it is juſt what I want you to be. Heavens, how could I make difficulties about it! *I* who in future cannot possibly love in any way but with such reasonableness and moderation as I had never known before!

I have seen M. Turgot, and spoke to him about your fears as to the Domains. He told me that they had not yet come to any decision in the matter, that M. de Beaumont, the Intendant of Finance, was busied with it, and meantime the companies created by M. l'abbé

Terray for the work had been forbidden to take any action. M. Turgot told me that as soon as he had full information from M. de Beaumont, he would tell me if any action was projected or decided on in the matter of the Domains, but that, speaking generally, he assured me there would be great respect for property. I did not stay at this: I told your business to M. de Vaines, and he answered definitely: "Let him be perfectly at ease; the abbé Terray's scheme will never be put into action by M. Turgot: I can answer for that." That, my friend, is the reply of the two people who can reassure you, and although they are not exactly similar, still, I think, they have the same meaning. I send you the stay of action which I have already mentioned; I am afraid your Intendant will not be very eager to publish it, and I join with it a letter of M. de Condorcet's, which seems to me so good, that I have had it copied. My friend, do not thank me for the trouble I am taking to send you what gives me pleasure; it is not for your sake, but that I may hear what you have to say about it, for I still have much taste for your wit: it is of excellent quality and so natural. Good-bye.

Letter 64

to the same

Friday, 23 September, 1774.

My friend, I am victimising you: I write often enough to overwhelm you. It is the only occupation which can make me think that I am still alive, and although I think that to be altogether dead is the better condition, still in my suffering, I find it pleasant to turn again to you. Even if you do not understand me, you will at

leaſt liſten to me, you will answer me ; for it makes me sad to have no letter from you. Two poſts already loſt : Monday and Wednesday ; and I have brought this evil on myself, for even without loving me you would have continued to write to me punctually. Oh, Heavens, to what excesses I have been carried ! I have loved you and hated you furiously ; no doubt it was the laſt flicker of a heart which was to die out for ever ; for honeſtly I have heard nothing of it, I do not know what has happened to it, since. I thought you would have written to M. d'Alembert on Wednesday : when I came in, my firſt words were to ask him if he had not had a letter ; and he did not know, for it is his admirable cuſtom not to open his letters till the next morning. I soon learned that he had not had one from you, and my physical discomfort was as a result so sensibly increased that I was obliged to take a sedative ; and then by dint of reason and argument I brought myself not indeed not to care, but not to torment myself because of it. Now why do you say that you only receive letters once a week, while they reach Paris three times a week ? But what good is that to me, if you do not write to me, if on Saturday I am in the same ſtate as on Wednesday and Monday. But only indifference is dumb ; if you were annoyed with me, even if you hated me, you ought to take pleasure in telling me so. In a word, my friend, you muſt have *condemned* me, unless you feel a need to confound me.

I have juſt given M. de Vaines a packet for you. You will think me mad when you find in it the *Gazette de France* ; but there is an article in it which will do you good. How can one help feeling relieved oneself when one sees that so many wretched people are to be ? That kind of intereſt is now-a-days the only one that touches my heart. *Misfortune*, oh, the word has a great empire over me. I think I told you that I went

to the Invalides one day lately with madame de Châtillon. I left it heart-broken: at every step I saw the most painful sights: men blind, or mutilated, faces made terrible by wounds, broken jaws . . . Oh, Heavens, I said, every living thing here is suffering and these are not imaginary ills: these are not people who are in love with themselves, who torment themselves, this is no privation of letters: it is not even, regret for the loss of all that was dearest; these are physical ills that subdue all men equally. My friend I was torn by all these reflections, and said to myself: I then am more wretched than any one I see here, for I could console, pity, comfort these wretches by my care, my interest, and they can do nothing for me; they do not even understand the language of the ills from which I suffer. The only man in the realm of nature who could console me is the very one who makes my grief still heavier; he tears open my wound, and if I complained, he would not hear me. My friend, such were my thoughts while madame de Châtillon went up and down, looked, asked questions. She did not see misery anywhere, for it was not in her heart; she was calm and curious; that is an admirable state of mind if one wants amusement or instruction, and neither are any longer in my line.

You know that M. de Muy is to be married one of these days to madame de Saint-Blancard, a Canoness of Germany, whom you may have met during the last war. They say she is amiable, that she was pretty, and that she is in love with M. de Muy. The marriage gives me a very good opinion of the honesty of M. de Muy: it is an admirable way of using his fortune. The comte de Broglie is at Ruffec; is it very far from Montauban? I should be grieved if you went there; the journey would upset your head again, and give you no means of carrying out the plans of making a

fortune which it would cause you to form. My friend you must get your thoughts settled ; you must see a lot of M. de Muy ; he must know you, and if he has any intelligence, he will want to make use of your knowledge and your talents. Above all, bring your father with you ; his presence will be useful to you, and besides, if his fortune is to be improved, he must show himself ; people will not seek out hidden merit.

I thoroughly applaud your horror of living in the provinces ; but the country is not the same thing as the provinces. I should prefer life in a village, with peasants for company, to the town of Montauban and the excellent company which composes it. But, good Heavens, in the midst of Paris there are so many provincial towns, so many fools, so many pompous nonenities ! All things considered, the good is everywhere so rare, that I don't know that it isn't a great misfortune to have known it, and have made of it one's *daily bread.* One might say of the habit of living with people of intelligence and merit, what M. de la Rochefoucauld said of the court : they do not make one happy, and they prevent one from feeling comfortable anywhere else. That is exactly what I feel every time I find myself in different company.

My friend, guess the riddle if you can, but I must tell you that it is not a happiness, not a pleasure, not even a consolation to be loved—deeply loved—by anyone who has only a very little intelligence. Oh ! how I hate myself for only being able to love what is admirable ! How hard to please I have become ! But is it my fault ? Look at the education I received : madame du Deffand—I must cite her for her intelligence—the President Hênault, the abbé Bon, the archbishops of Toulouse and Aix, M. Turgot, M. d'Alembert, the abbé de Boismont, M. de Mora : such are the people who taught me to speak and to

think and who deigned to think something of me. After that, how can one's head be turned by the love of . . . But, my friend, do you think one can love when one has no intelligence, or only a little? I can see that you think me mad, or maundering; but no matter. All that I have just told you weighed on my mind. Good-night; I keep a little space to tell you to-morrow that I have not heard from you. My friend, forgive me: that seems to me impossible.

Saturday, after the post.

You are ill, you have a fever. Oh, my friend, that does not awaken my interest, it causes me terror. I seem to bring misfortune on everyone I love. Heavens, if I had to fear, if I had to feel again the alarms, the despair which consumed two years of my life, why did you prevent me from dying? You did not love me, and yet you have enslaved me. On Monday, if I had not news of you . . .

Letter 65

TO THE SAME

Monday, 26 September, 1774.

My friend, all day yesterday I wanted to write to you, but my strength failed me. I have been in a state of suffering which deprived me of the power of speech and action. I cannot eat; the words "food" and "pain" have become synonyms to me. But it is of you that I want to speak, it is you who occupy my thoughts, about you that I am disturbed. Alas! I had wanted to believe it! But it is another mistake. Though I am no longer capable of feeling pleasure and

happiness, my heart seems quite fresh for grief, it is increased by your suffering. I see you ill, I have to reproach myself for having caused you some moments of sadness; without flattering myself that you attached any great interest either to my affection, or to myself, still I may have disturbed your rest, and the thought desolates me. My friend, from you I learned to distress, to torment the man I loved. Oh, how cruelly I have been punished for it. If Heaven reserved me . . . But my blood runs cold, I will rather die. The thought is a thousand times more dreadful than the most violent death can ever be. You would like never to re-awake, and it is *you* who confide this disgust of life to me, to *me*? How different were the words which *he* wrote on his death-bed! "*I was going to see you again, I must die: how dreadful is my fate! But you have loved me, and you still make me feel a sweet emotion, I die for you,*" etc., etc. . . . My friend, I could not write down these words without bursting into tears; the emotion which dictated them was the tenderest and most passionate that ever was.

Misfortune, absence, sickness, the charms of two passionate women whose sole object he was, nothing, could shake, or cool, that heart of fire. I thought I should die yesterday when I read a letter from M. de Fuentès. He tells me that his brother has burned all my letters without reading a line of them; that his grief has not yet allowed him to see any of the objects which were dear to his son; that he will preserve for me the tenderest, the most lively, gratitude for the proofs of friendship which I at all times gave to M. de Mora; that I sustained him in his misfortune, and that he would gladly repay at the price of his life all that his son owed me. He dares, in his own name, and in that of the son whom he mourns, to ask of me one favour: to persuade M. d'Alembert, who was his

friend, to write for him a kind of funeral oration which will honour the memory of his son, and be his own consolation for the few remaining days of his life, and which he will read to his family as an expression of feeling honourable to it and as an encouragement to virtue for his other children. And the touching prayer ends with tears. Oh, how many it has made me shed, and I am not afraid of boring you by telling you a story which would not leave one cold in a novel. Heavens, I adore M. de Fuentès; he was worthy to have such a son. What a loss, indeed, for him, and for all who loved him. And yet we are all still alive. His father, his sister, I,—we should have counted ourselves too fortunate to die at the moment that he was taken from us. My friend, feel for me, have pity on me; you alone in all the realm of nature can bring some moments of sweet consolation to a mortally wounded heart. I feel it: your presence has lifted the weight which overwhelmed me; now that I no longer see you, my mind wanders, it goes from one extreme to the other, as you have judged from the violence of my conduct towards you. My friend, set me on the right way again; be my guide; if you want me to live, do not abandon me. I dare no longer say to you "I love you": I no longer know. Judge me. In the distress which fills my life, you know me better than I know myself. I do not know whether it is you or death, whom I implore. I need help, I need deliverance from the misery which is killing me.

My friend, if I have no news of you to-day, if I do not at least hear of you, I do not know how I shall live till Wednesday. What a dreadful sameness! Wednesdays and Saturdays. . . . I lived only for those two days. Now again I am distressed and waiting for the same thing. Heavens, can you imagine, can you realise all I feel, all I suffer? Would anyone ever

believe that I once could know calmness ? Well, my friend, it is true that I lived for twenty-four hours with not a thought of you ; and then for many days I was sunk in total apathy ; I was alive, but I seemed to be outside myself ; I remembered I had once a heart which loved you ; I saw it afar off, but it no longer animated me.

Alas, if you are ill, or if you are like the *wretch who loves nothing*, you will not understand. If such language does not touch the heart, it is mortally cold; it will be for me to pity you for the weariness and boredom I shall have caused you. Good-bye, I shall not seal my letter till the postman has been. In God's name, see to it that I have no need to have recourse to my friend in the Post Office so as to get my letters earlier.

My friend, do not take too much quinine, it hurts the chest, and when it cures a fever too quickly, it almost always makes one costive. In a word, think that you are not free to neglect your health : my repose, my life depend on it. My friend, tell me whether I love you, you ought to know about it ; for my part, I no longer know myself at all. For instance, at this moment, I feel that I passionately desire news of you ; and I also feel, and actively, that I need death. My body is in pain from head to foot ; my mind is exalted and my body worn out. From this dis-accord come misery and almost madness. But I must really stop. Good-bye, I wish I could go and meet the postman.

Monday, 4 o'clock.

The postman has come. M. d'Alembert has no letter, and yet the courier from Montauban arrives on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. My friend, I am very unhappy; you are either very ill or very cruel, to leave me in such uncertainty. You know whether

my health, my condition, can endure an increase of anxiety and grief. Heavens, what am I to do, what is to become of me between now and Wednesday! I am going to send to the chevalier d'Aguesseau's.

Letter 66

TO M. DE GUIBERT, COLONEL-IN-COMMAND OF THE CORSICAN LEGION, AT MONTAUBAN-EN-QUERCY[1]

Monday, midnight, 26 September, 1774.

The comte de Crillon has just come specially to beg me to tell you from him that he is going to marry Mlle Carbon. Everything is agreed and settled. She is the young person who wrote yesterday to M. Trudaine to say that she had chosen the comte de Crillon, and hoped that he would approve her choice. He was delighted to hear it, as you can well imagine. To-day there was a meeting of relations; in a word, they are to be married in a week, and it is hardly a week since the comte de Crillon was let into the secret. It is to his father alone that he owes this fine, this great, fortune; it is vast, more than 100,000 francs a year, and on conditions the most favourable to M. de Crillon.

He spent four hours to-day with Mlle Carbon, he had long conversations with her, and is certain that she is intelligent. That is what it is the fashion to call happiness, so we must rejoice that our friend is happy. I am very glad on the surface of my mind, but feel deeply my own grief, and uneasiness. My mind is totally upset, and nothing that has no connection with its one prime interest can give me a moment's peace. Have you a fever? Why have not you had a letter written if you could not write yourself? In a word,

[1] Unpublished. [V-G.]

why do you add to a situation already dreadful, alarms and a kind of terror which I am now used to finding justified? I am too wretched . . . If you have to reproach yourself with negligence, your crime is too unpardonable! But it is not so, my friend, you are not guilty; you are ill, very ill: I shudder, and tremble as I wait for Wednesday.

The comte de Crillon is up to the eyes in business and worries, and he was most distressed at not being able to write to you himself. Good-bye, my friend, I have written you a volume—

Letter 67

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Fontneuve, near Montauban, Friday evening,
30 *September*, 1774.

My friend, I have an idea which gives me pleasure: it is that our correspondence is so little like that of society folk, of indifferent people, that we often write four long pages not a line of which could we show to anyone. Public events find no place in them; we speak only of ourselves, and in a language which would seem to many people strange and exaggerated. Often we do not even speak of our health; a thousand other things touch us more nearly.

This said, I am going to fill these two pages for you with the things which usually fill other letters. First, I thank you for the information you obtained about this business of the Domains. M. de Vaines' answer relieves my father's mind of a great anxiety; for the imagination of a father of a family has to endure many worries of which we know nothing. How many kinds of suffering there are in this wretched globe! I should

very much like to persuade him to come to Paris this winter, and I hope I shall succeed. But it will not be until after me, for he has business here until January. I shall be in Paris myself at the beginning of November: that is quite certain.

I thank you too for all the news you sent me. I think the criticism of the Bishop of Senez charming, and so too is the little piece on the Encyclopedia; but it is really Voltaire's? Ever since the *Letter of the Theologian* I never know whether I have to do with Voltaire or M. de C. . . . By the way, where is the latter? I see from his letter to the Comte de Crillon that he is away, and will be for some time. Is he not with his family? Certainly he works when he is with them more than I do. His activity of mind is a blessing both for him and for others. My life is spent in long walks. I get up at dawn, and do not come in until 9 o'clock. That is the time I give to the *Gracchi*. At 9.0, we all meet, and take tea. I have also, in the afternoon or evening, two more hours of quiet: I employ them in reading or writing my letters. I go to bed early. I have heard no more of the attack of fever, but my sisters are not cured of it.

Talking of the *Gracchi*, you would be very pleased with me. I sometimes do not write four lines in a day; I am making myself very severe: it will go all right. Heavens, what a superb plot it is: an inexhaustible mine. And talking of tragedy, I thought Mme de Boufflers had deserted me, I had written to her from Bordeaux: she has just answered me in a charming letter. After that, we shall have much difficulty in making anything of *that* friendship. I have read and re-read the *Eulogy of La Fontaine* by La Harpe. It has given me the greatest, the most lively, pleasure. I prefer the second part to the first, but, if you will forgive me for saying so, I have never been able to

think his style artless. I thought that when he said, on page 20: "Where are we to stop with such flashes? One could quote a hundred as good as this," he was becoming too familiar, and that on page 40, when he says that "inexorable justice leaves stains on the garments of glory with which posterity enfolds the shades of the illustrious," he was very bombastic, particularly in a eulogy of La Fontaine. The one seemed to me like *Dorat*, the other like *Thomas*. I thought too that what he makes God say, on page 13, to La Fontaine the story-teller, was in very bad taste.

These observations are for you alone, and solely to find out whether your judgment will approve of mine. For the rest, I repeat again that the *Eulogy* as a whole gave me great pleasure. I cannot imagine that the one which received the prize can have been better. But one thing has given me a pleasure of another kind, a very solid pleasure: the Edict on corn. I am speaking of it to M. d'Alembert. M. Turgot will win immortal fame if he continues to work on such good principles. When I see the good he has done, and promises to do, I cannot retain any rancour at his not answering the letter I wrote him when he was appointed to the Admiralty. I do not suppose he had any intention of doing me a discourtesy, and even if he had, let him only often issue edicts like that, and I shall none the less be the warmest of his admirers.

My friend, tell me how it was you made your peace with *Orpheus*. I think you had heard it and did not like it. Is it Méliko who caused this revolution? And shall I not hear him, the divine creature? He will have left when I arrive. Three months ago, I met him at Glück's; he talked and I should have liked him to sing. I told you that the *Che faro senza Euridice* was sublime. Come to me if you want to judge all one must feel. I will do the same for you. Good-bye,

my friend. Here we have only two posts a week to Paris ; one direct, by Toulouse, the other by Bordeaux.

Do you want to teach *me* this, me who count them and live on them ?

Letter 68

TO M. DE GUIBERT

Friday evening, 30 *September*, 1774.

My friend, you have saved me from death, and you kill me by leaving me in an anxiety which overwhelms my mind. I had no news of you on Wednesday, nor did the Chevalier d'Aguesseau, and he has been to all the people who might have heard. Heavens, how little I knew myself, how wrongly I spoke when I assured you that my mind was closed to happiness, to pleasure, that it could never again know great misfortunes, and that I had nothing more to fear ! Alas ! I cannot breathe since Wednesday ; I see you lying ill ; I feel a secret alarm which terrifies me. What an awful state of mind it is that you make me find myself in again ! The Wednesdays, the Saturdays, the dreadful days which for two whole years were the hope and despair of my life ! But could you be so ill as to forget that you are loved passionately ? And if you have remembered it, how is it you have failed to have news of you sent to me ? Did you not know that to make me fear for you was to give my heart up to mortal grief ? My friend, if you could have caused me to avoid my present suffering, you are indeed blameworthy, and it seems to me that such a wrong ought to cure me completely. But, Heavens, is one free ? Can I calm myself, make myself cold, as my will directs, or even as yours would desire ? Oh ! I can only love you

and suffer, such is the motion, such the feeling, of my heart ; I cannot check it, or arouse it, but I should like to die. I have thoughts which are an active poison, but it does not yet work quickly enough. Whether I hear to-morrow that you are very ill, or whether I hear nothing at all, I shall have lived too long. No, that is impossible, you will have thought of me, and will have done something for me. So I wait, but trembling, with an impatience which has never been felt but by a heart as passionate as it is unhappy. Oh ! Diderot is right ; only the unhappy know how to love. But, my friend, that does not relieve you if you are in pain ; and when you are calm, you do not much value it. Well, I love you, and I do not need your affection for my heart to give itself, abandon itself, to you.

All that the abbé Terray has done, or proposed to do, in the matter of the domains, has come to nothing ; everything has been destroyed, broken up, annihilated ; in a word, you can be as tranquil about your father's property as you were ten years ago. M. Turgot assured me of this himself yesterday, and asked me for news of you, and reproached himself for not having yet had a minute to answer the people to whom he could not bring himself to send a merely official letter. M. de Vaines charged me to remember him to you ; he is really overwhelmed by his work ; they have so much to put right, so much to foresee, that they have not a moment to breathe. The abbé Terray has been ordered to pay back to the Royal Treasury the hundred thousand crowns which he had anticipated on the proceeds of the farming of the taxes : and M. Turgot has declared that he would not take the fifty thousand francs which came to him of right from the same source. He economises in everything ; from this he gains courage to make reforms in the posts ; which he is patron. He is an excellent man, and if he

can ſtay in office, he will become the idol of the nation ; he is a fanatic for the public good, and puts all his ſtrength into it. The marriage of the comte . . .

Saturday, after the poſt.

I was interrupted, and indeed it is not the comte de Crillon who occupies my mind. I have your letter, my friend ; you are well : that is enough to make me live. At leaſt, I hope you will not be seriously ill, and I breathe again. Alas ! I know not how to answer you ; the shocks you give to my mind are too violent for me to find words. My friend, all I can tell you is that your letter charms me by the tone of kindness and confidence that reigns in it : it is honourable and true like your heart, and if it did not in every reſpect answer mine, that would not be your fault, and I have no reason to complain : alas, no. I am pleased with you, but I shall say, with *Phædra* :

Life I have come to hate and love to deteſt.

Oh ! If you only knew how I deteſt myself, how much reason I have to do so ! The truth is in my heart, and once more I have to reproach myself for usurping the eſteem and the affection that people give me. M. de Fuentès would like "*to pay his debt to me at the coſt of his life*," and the poor man does not know that he has perhaps to reproach me for the death of his son ! Oh ! I die at the thought . . . All this time I have fallen into a condition which alarms my friends ; they credit it to my emotion at the loss I have suffered, whereas it is the alarm you have caused me which has diverted me from the regrets by which I am torn. What ! While I die of grief, I am unworthy of the feelings I inspire ! Do you imagine the whole horror of my position ? Do you think that it is in

nature that I should endure it long ? Where am I to find courage to face such grief ? Whom can I find to share it ? Who could join me in suffering such horror ? Well, I say to myself, I feel it, and I am not deceived : if M. de Mora could be brought to life again, he would understand me, he would love me, and I should no more feel remorse or misery. This feeling must let you see all that I have lost ! But why do you reassure me about my secret ? My friend, such carefulness ought to have been repugnant to your delicacy, and it wounds mine. How can you think that I could have such a suspicion ? Even if I hated you, I should esteem you. You have done me harm, but you are still honourable.

My friend, why have you not written to me by the last two posts ? Why do you not tell me : "*I am answering your letter of such and such a date.*" We must understand each other ; and a troubled brain needs to be treated considerately. My friend, look at me smitten with a mortal sickness, and show me the care the consideration that one shows to the dying ; it will not make any difference to your happiness. I promise by what is most sacred to me, by the memory of M. de Mora, never to worry you, never to demand anything of you ; and to judge from your letter, which is such that my heart thanks you for it, you can no longer deceive me ; I can never complain, and if I was distressed, you would have feeling enough to listen to me without finding it tiresome. Good-bye ! I do not answer you ; amid the confusion of my thoughts, the trouble I am in, I feel only one thing : I am alive, and I have lost the man who loved me.

My friend, if you do not feel it is a constraint, write to me by every post : I need it. Yes, *I desire*, *I demand*, and it is my last wish, that you should not

keep my letters. You will tell me, and I will believe you: do you quite understand? I will believe you. Good-bye.

Letter 69

TO M. DE GUIBERT[1]

Sunday, 4.0 *a.m.*, 2 *October*, 1774.

I UNSEAL my letter: I cannot get to sleep, and you are going to be victimised because sleep flies from me. My heart was full of you, my head busied with your letter, and with thoughts like this my blood could not cool. Yes, my friend, you have guessed right: it was of madame de Châtillon that I spoke to you. What you tell me for myself relating to her is very amiable; but she makes me discontented with myself; she thinks she is fond of me, she is active, kind, honourable, but her head is as empty as a turnip, and her mind a real desert; and you can see that I have neither the time nor the strength to enlighten the one or to fill the other. She is often tiresome to me, she deprives me of my thoughts and my affections: I only feel lonely when I am separated from what is dear to me.

The comtesse de Boufflers has not mentioned your name to me since her departure, and I have often seen her. She is obsessed by her daughter-in-law; three or four times at dinner she wanted to make her the subject of the conversation; but the attempt always fell flat: madame d'Anville could think of nothing but M. Turgot, and I was full of the letter I was expecting, and then of my desire to read it: in a word, there was not a chance to think about *the prettiest*, *the*

[1] Unpublished. [V-G.]

most witty and piquant young person in the world ; but she was not there, so she did not suffer.

Have you ever read the *Commentary of Mathanasius* ? Well, your petty and malicious criticisms of La Fontaine resemble it like two peas. And who told you it was perfect ? Neither *Athalie* nor *Mahomet* are that ; La Fontaine himself might be criticised in the same way. My friend, be hard to please for yourself, with yourself, and be indulgent towards what is good, what has given you pleasure, and above all forgive me for being *right.* I am dying of desire to see the *Gracchi* ; and what charms me is that you find the subject so rich. That tells me that your mind will have done everything , which will be excellent.

So you will not wait for your father ? Is that well ? I do not know ; I am too closely concerned to judge. How much pleasure one loses by loving too much ! I can no longer speak of you ; I used to praise you once, and a few days ago someone said to me : " *But you are no longer fond of M. de Guibert ; the good Condorcet and M. de Crillon are quite cutting him out.*" But that is because he is indeed very far away, and my strength is no longer sufficient to bring my thoughts to bear on anything except my immediate surroundings. My friend, the truest person often misses the truth. But, according to Fontenelle, *that is not lying, it is not concealing the truth one ought to publish.*

Good-bye, or rather, good-morning. The repose, the silence, of all nature ought to bring calm to my mind ; but, good God, how active is the poison which consumes it ! The cold of hemlock does not yet penetrate it. I await the day-light impatiently ; I shall re-read your letter. So I must believe you rather than the post-office time table, which had told me that I might have news of you three times a week.

Letter 70

TO M. DE GUIBERT

Monday, 3 October, 1774.

My friend, how sick my mind is. I have no more words, only cries; I have read, re-read, and shall read your letter a hundred times. My friend, what blessings and what woes meet in it! What pleasure mingled with the most cruel bitterness! The reading of it has increased, redoubled, all the agitation of my heart. I can no longer find calmness; you have alternately ravished and torn my heart. Never have I thought you more amiable, more worthy to be loved, and never has the memory of M. de Mora torn me with a profounder, a sharper, a more bitter grief. Yes, I could die of it; my heart was oppressed, I was in a state of frenzy last night; so violent a condition must destroy me, or drive me insane. Alas! I fear neither the one nor the other; if I loved you less, if my regrets were less dear to me, with what delight, with what transport would I deliver myself from the life which overwhelms me. Never, never has any creature lived in such torture and despair.

My friend, we make a poison of the only blessing which nature affords, the only blessing which men have been able neither to spoil nor to corrupt. Everything, in the world, is valued and paid for by money; consideration, happiness, friendship, virtue even, all these are bought, paid for, judged by the weight of gold; there is one thing only which is above popular opinion, which has remained spotless like the sun, and has the sun's warmth, which gives life to the mind, enlightens it, sustains it, makes it stronger, greater. My friend, need I name this gift of nature? But when it does not bring happiness to the mind which it

fills, then one must die. Yes, I ought to have died; I needed death, gave myself up to it; how cruel you were! Oh! What did you want to do with the life you were saving? To fill it with anxiety and tears! To add to the most dreadful misfortune the tortures of remorse! To make me loathe every moment of my life, and yet to tie me to it by an interest at which my heart revolts, which twenty times a day appears to my thoughts in the light of a crime! God, I am guilty, and heaven is my witness that nothing was dearer to my heart than virtue. And it is not you who caused me to stray? What! Do you think that I hurled myself into the abyss unaided? So I can impute neither my faults, nor my misery, to you? Oh! I wanted to expiate them, I saw the end of my ills; hatred of you made me stronger than death. Why, by what fatality, did I find you again? Why did my fear lest you were ill soften my heart? Why do you at once tear me in pieces and console me? Why this deadly mixture of pleasure and pain, of balm and poison? It all works too violently upon a mind exalted by passion and misery; it all completes the destruction of a machine worn out by sickness and lack of sleep.

Alas! I told you so; in the excess of my woes, I know not whether it is you, or death, that I invoke; it is by you or by it that I must be relieved, or for ever cured. All nature can do no more for me. Alas! Have I left a prayer, a desire, a regret, a thought, of which you and M. de Mora are not the object? My friend, I thought my heart was extinct; I told you so, and I found sweetness in this repose; but Heavens, how fleeting was this disposition! It was only caused by the effects of constant opium. Well, I will retrieve, I will recover, my reason, or lose it entirely.

But tell me, how is it possible that I have not yet spoken of you? That I have not told you that I fear a return of the fever? That I hope to have news of you to-day, since the post comes in to-day. If I have none, I shall not rebuke you, but I shall suffer till Wednesday. Good-bye, my friend. Your goodness, your kindness, your truth have filled my heart to overflowing with tenderness and sensibility.

Monday evening.

I have had a word from you, only a single word; but it tells me that you are free from fever, and this calms me. But you are anxious about your sister; so too am I; I am so close to everything that affects you. I too am feverish; to-night's paroxysm of pain has disturbed my blood and my pulse; but do not be anxious, death never came so exactly when it was wanted. The unhappy do not die, and they are too weak, too cowardly, when they are in love, to put an end to their own lives. I shall live, shall suffer, shall wait, not for happiness, not for pleasure, for what then? My friend, I am speaking to *you*, answer me.

Consider if your *rashness* is not so great as to be dangerous: you write to me, and do not seal your letter; and that you may have no doubt about it, I send you your envelope. I have sent the letter to M. de Vaines. The comte de Crillon is to be married in a day or two; he hopes for happiness, the greatest happiness: may he not be deceived! He has asked me for news of you, with the tenderest interest; I gave them also to the chevalier d'Aguesseau, who is at Versailles. The Pope[1] is dead of an illness which gives rise to the most horrible suspicions.

[1] Clement XIV.

Good-night, my friend; my head is heavy, I have more pain than usual, but I have news of you, that is the important thing. My present disposition is very strange: for the last twelve hours, my eyes always place before me the same object, whether they are open or closed. This object which I cherish, which I have adored, fills me with terror and alarm. At this very moment, he is there; what I touch, what I write, is no longer sensible to me, no more present to my mind. But why am I afraid? Why this distress? If it was . . .

Letter 71

TO THE SAME

Wednesday, 6 October, 1774.

My friend, I have no news of you; I was expecting them. Alas! I feel that the mind which has least hope can still be deceived, and that the head which is least susceptible of illusions, yet builds too many of them. Forgive me, my friend; the need I have of you makes me count too much on you; I ought also to correct myself of that error.

I am sick, and in a state of inexpressible pain; every kind of food disagrees with me equally. My doctor concludes that there is a stoppage in the *pylorus*; I did not know that strange word, but one is in torture when that door refuses to open. I take *hemlock*; if it could be prepared like Socrates', I should take it with pleasure! It would cure me of this too slow and cruel malady that is called life. You hurt me, my friend; you make death necessary to me, and you keep me alive. What weakness! What inconsistency! Yes, I judge

myself rightly ; but I droop, I slacken, and, I feel sure, a day, a moment, will come when I shall very bitterly repent having so long put off. Indeed, if I cast my eyes on the past, I see that I should have been only too fortunate had the term of my life been marked by Wednesday, the first of June. Heavens, what grief, what pain, I should have escaped. Yes, I tremble when I think that I can lay to your charge all that I have suffered since that fatal day. How ill-inspired you were ! My death would not have been an evil for you, and at the moment I am speaking to you you would not preserve any memory of it ; and instead of the oblivion which would let you enjoy repose and pleasure, I overwhelm you with my ills, I lay the whole weight of my life upon your mind. Oh ! I know your mind well, its sensibility, its strength, its virtue ; it would be capable of making great sacrifices to relieve misfortune ; but it is not in your character to nurse it, to soften it, to calm it. Anything that requires continuous action is impossible to you : your heart is passionate, but it has no knowledge of tenderness. Passion only works in spasms ; it can act and move, but tenderness can take care ; it helps, it consoles, *it would have written by every post*, because it would have taken thought for the needs of a suffering mind. No, I do not reproach you, reproaches are useless or distressing. Oh ! how it would grieve me to give you a moment's pain.

My friend, I needed to know whether your fever had come back or not, and whether your sister's had subsided. When I wrote to you last, I was delirious, I think ; I had a burning fever all night ; it left me, and took with it the image which hid every other object from my sight ; but I cannot imagine why it brought terror to my soul. Oh ! If only I could buy back his life for a single hour, there is no torture

which I would not have strength to face, and I would say:

> Death and hell before my eyes I see;
> Gladly would I descend, Ramire, for thee.

But, my friend, that is not all I wanted to say to you; I am agitated, I cannot go on; good-bye.

Saturday, midnight.

Before anything else, I want to tell you that your ink is as white as the paper, and to-day this has really made me cross. I had had your letter brought to me at M. Turgot's, where I was dining with twenty others; it was handed to me at table; I had on one side of me the archbishop of Aix, and on the other the inquisitive abbé Morellet. I opened my letter under the table, and I could barely see that there was black on the white, and the Abbé made the same remark. Mme de Boufflers, who was next to the archbishop of Aix, asked what I was busy with: "Remember the place you are in, and you will know what I am reading." "Doubtless a memorandum for M. Turgot?" "Just so, Madam, and I want to read it before giving it to him." And, indeed, before going back to the study, I had read your letter, and I am going to answer it, but in haste, because I am dying of fatigue after the great effort I made to-day. I have seen a hundred people, and, as your letter has done my mind good, talked, forgot that I was dead, and am really exhausted. In truth, *I made a great hit*, because I brought out so well the charm and wit of the people with whom I was, and it is to you, my friend, that they owed a pastime so pleasant to their vanity. Mine is not intoxicated by your flattery: I will answer you, with *Couci*:

> Love me, my prince, instead of praising me.

My friend, take care in future not to have the

kindness, not to take the trouble, to bring out my good points, to show off my wealth; never have I felt so poor, so ruined, so wretched; when you appreciate what I have, and let me see my resources, you prove to me that all is loſt. One plan alone is left to me, and for long I have foreseen it, even thought it necessary: it is to declare myself utterly bankrupt. But I behave juſt as men do in that: I put off, I delay, delude myself with hopes, with chimæras; I know that is what they are, and yet they suſtain me a little. But you deſtroy everything by your horrible catalogue of them. What a deplorable inventory! If anyone but you had thought of wishing to console me and make me cling to life by such discouraging consolations, I should have answered as *Agnes* did:

Horatius with one word will do more than you.

And it is Horatius who speaks to me! My friend, my mind is crushed by it. What torment do you leave unimagined for me? I shall be, you say, *guaranteed*, *suſtained*, *defended*, etc., etc. Well, I have been nothing of the sort. If you value your eſteem so highly, I make no more claim to it. I have been inconsiſtent, weak, miserable very miserable; I have feared for you, and have wandered from the right path. I was wrong, no doubt, and the recognition of it is one evil the more. I have not an emotion, I do not say a word to you, which does not cause me regret or repentance.

My friend, I ought to hate you. Alas! For how long a time have I no more done what I ought to do, what I wish to do! I hate myself, I condemn myself, and I love you.

Letter 72

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Fontneuve, near Montauban, Saturday, 8 October, 1774.

Yes, my friend, I will gladly begin all my letters by telling you of the arrival and the date of yours. You have full right to demand all possible exactitude from me. Your own is so amiable, so generous, so constant. Twice a week it softens my separation from you. Wednesdays and Fridays are in my life what Wednesdays and Saturdays are in yours.

The two last have brought me news of you; yesterday's are dated Friday evening, and Saturday after the post. You have been very anxious, very disturbed. Heavens, how it grieves me to have been the occasion of it. Why did I tell you of those two attacks of fever? But would it have been better to have had them without letting you know? The fever was the result of the disposition of my mind; I was upset by your silence, by the idea of your hatred. The proof that it was solely due to my moral condition is that I had news of you on Wednesday, and that the attack I was expecting the next day did not come on. You have suffered from what was your own work, my friend, and yet I regret it. But how that letter on Wednesday touched me! I felt, I shared, all that M. de Fuentès' letter made you feel. You are indeed right, there is not in any novel anything so touching, so noble, as this worthy father's request. I hope that M. d'Alembert will pay attention to it.

But why aggravate your ills by imagining that you may have contributed to his death? He had for two years carried it within his bosom, and had twice escaped it in Spain; he had left that country a dying man. The consul at Bordeaux told me that the doctor had

declared that he would have died just the same anywhere. Your misery is great enough for you not to imagine circumstances to increase it. Weep, my friend, but do not say that you have lost everyone who loved you. Do not hate life and look on love with horror. Life still offers you consolations, interests, emotions. Oh! why should you curse love? I bless it a thousand times; it is by love that you live, to love that I owe you. Never shall I receive from it a dearer benefit. It is love which has been intermingled with my friendship, which has brought to it the activity, the charm, the passion, which make my attachment to you resemble none of the other affections by which you are surrounded. Consider: would you be distressed as you have just been, by another's silence, another's health? Would another's indifference, another's hate, have given me a fever? Would another's letter have cured me? When we have such an interest in each other, we live, we love, we are certainly more alive than three parts of the human race. So let us be less discontented with our hearts, and hope that they may still have some happy moments.

Such at any rate will be the moment when we meet again. I count the days, I would I could hasten them. This emotion tears me from the feelings of duty and of nature; it makes me feel bored where I ought to find only calm and rest. I am interrupted. I will come back to you this evening. The post does not leave till to-morrow, and I have still a thousand things to say to you. . . .

Why will you not answer my letter, my friend? What could it contain which could displease you, embarrass you, chill you? This last effect of it will be my greatest misfortune. I wanted to comfort you, to calm you, to cure you of all the torment and the pain

your feelings might cause you. But if you loved me less, it would make me die of grief. I have not given you back to yourself: I think my claims on your confidence, your friendship, your full reliance, have become even more sacred. I have laid my heart open before you, and from this moment, not an emotion shall enter it that I shall not confide to you. Do the same by me, and for ever abolish the word *indulgence*; it wounds me, it offends me. My heart will be always close to yours! Lean, rest, repose, on it.

You order me to burn your letters; I will obey you; I will let you know by the first post that I have done so, and in truth you can believe me. But have you thought that the effort would cost me nothing? It will cost me much. I beg a few days' respite; I want to re-read them. Could you possibly be mistaken as to the feeling which attaches me to them. You have not set such store by mine, and yet you love me: how did you do it? But is it not better for me to give them back to you, bring them back to you? You shall burn them yourself. All those which I have given you back, have no doubt already undergone that fate. If not, I beg a favour of you; we will put them all together; they shall remain in your hands. Answer me on this point. Tell me that you authorise me to keep them until my return, if not I will obey you with groans, but I will obey.

I am going to finish my letter with things that are very cold beside all that has so far filled it. Public news, private events, all that has not to do with you, seem to me a language which we ought never to speak. Among them all, what has most interested me is the comte de Crillon's marriage. He is now very rich: will he be the happier? He deserved it, at any rate. I have written to him. The thing which has interested me next, chiefly because it has made my father

easy, and he was seriously alarmed, is the assurance M. Turgot has given you that he will not touch the domains. I am delighted at the hundred thousand crowns which he has made the abbé Terray refund, and at the disinterestedness with which he has given up his own portion of the farming of the taxes. Is it true that he is working to abolish forced labour ?

Good-bye, my friend, I will write to you by the first post ; I will not let any go by again without giving myself that pleasure.

I love you with all my heart. And how is it with you ? Tell me ; tell it me again, if I have lost nothing.

Good-bye again.

Letter 73

TO M. DE GUIBERT

Sunday evening, 9 *October*, 1774.

My friend, I have re-read your letter twice, and the total impression which I get from it is that you are very lovable, and that it is far easier not to love you at all than to love you with moderation. Make your commentary on that, not with your intelligence, for it is not to it that I speak. My friend, if I wished, I could stop at some words in your letter : they have hurt me.

> Oh ! Everything disturbs a heart accustomed to woes.

At least, if I could only say with *Bayard* :

> If my friend distresses me, he will wipe away my tears.[1]

You speak to me of my courage, my resources, of the way I spend my time, the employments of my heart,

[1] These lines are taken from the *Constable de Bourbon*. [V-G.]

in a way which makes me die of shame and regret at having let you see all my weakness. Well, it was in my heart, and none of my heart's emotions can now be hidden from you. When it was animated by hatred, I showed it you clearly; is it then the fact that I could only allow myself to hate? My friend, when I read again your recapitulation of all there can be in the world to save me from ruin, I ended by bursting into laughter, because it brought to my mind a saying of President Hénault's, which is well found. At a certain period of his life, he thought that to add to his consideration it was necessary for him to become devout; he made a general confession, and sent word afterwards to M. d'Argenson, his friend: "*one never finds oneself so rich as when one is moving house.*"

My friend, you have made me experience the opposite sensation; my heart trembled at it, and I might have said:

Heavens! I remain alone in the whole universe.

My friend, I quote you against yourself; you are more present to me than Racine, and it seems that my feelings gain strength when they make use of your expressions: but I have a thousand nothings to tell you: I must turn my thoughts away from an interest as sad as it is deep.

I go on with your letter, and return to the criticism of M. de la Harpe, which is so just that it is not worth while to combat it. First, I will make my own criticism: *one ought to say:* M. de la Harpe, and not: la Harpe, simply. That honour is due only to the Racines, the Voltaires, the Montesquieus, etc., etc., and one ought not to raise a man of letters of our own day to such a height. And then, my friend, I will tell you that you must have a very fine tact to be wounded because God is made to speak in a vulgar

fashion; there are some moments of His life and death which do not demand a very lofty style; but in truth, not those in which he created La Fontaine the *conteur*. Voltaire was as hard to please as you when in a criticism of M. Soret he said: *Jesus, put into verse, is abominable*. But this is too much of M. de la Harpe, even if he were a god: we have not yet had the *Eulogy* which was crowned.

I have just seen the comte de Crillon; he has written to you, so I have nothing to tell you about him, for you know that he is very amiable. I shall dine with him to-morrow at Madame d'Anville's. My friend, I love that house: it is one more at which I shall be able to see you: you shall live for what you love, and for the world, every evening, but will you not often dine with me? That will let you live in the society of the people who are most to your taste. Beasts and fools hardly start moving till five or six o'clock; that is the hour when I come back to my fireside, and almost always find there, if not what I would have chosen, at least what I would not avoid.

How can I have failed to tell you that I am urged, solicited, to restore my health at the house of Lord Shelburne? He is a man of wit, the Leader of the Opposition, he was the friend of Sterne: he adores his works. Must he not have the greatest attraction for me, and must I not be much shaken by his kind entreaties? Agree that if you had known of my good luck, you would not have omitted it in my pompous *inventory*.

Yes, the good Condorcet is at his mother's; he works ten hours a day, he has twenty correspondents, ten intimate friends, and each of them might, without fatuity, think himself the chief object of his interest. Never, never, has anyone lived so fully, had such great powers, or been so easy to get on with! But now I

remember that you have not said a word to me about the Duc de Choiseul ; has your ſtay at Chanteloup left not a single mark on the road ? Well, this is his present position in Paris : he is absolutely losing the public, and I think that the beſt thing that can happen to him juſt now is to ſtay forgotten ; for he would gain nothing from comparisons, from being set againſt others. Ten years ago we might have owed M. Turgot to him, and he chose Laverdys, Maupeous, Terrays, etc., etc.

Your letter to M. d'Alembert is admirable, and as we are very fond of passing on news, we have cut out the word *Gracchi*, and given it this evening to M. de Vaines who was charmed with it, and wanted to show it to one who might enjoy it while it could not alarm his modeſty. Heavens, wish to treat you discourteously, *you* whom he did not answer because he wanted to have the pleasure of answering you with his own hand ! My friend, the virtuous cannot be rude, and they cherish merit and talents.

You would never guess what is occupying me, what I desire : *to marry one of my friends*. I should like an idea which has come into my head to succeed. The archbishop of Toulouse might be of great service in bringing the business to a successful conclusion. She is a young person of sixteen, who has only a mother, and no father ; she has one brother. She will be given thirteen thousand francs a year on her marriage ; her mother will give her house-room, will keep her for a long time, for her son is a child. The girl cannot have less than six hundred thousand francs, and she might be richer ; would that suit you, my friend ? Tell me, and we will take ſteps, and we shall not be rebuffed, for the archbishop is as taƈtful as he is honourable. We will talk of all this ; and if it does not succeed, I know a man who would be very happy

to have you for his son-in-law, but his daughter is only eleven: she is an only child, and she will be very rich. My friend, above all things I want your happiness, and the means of procuring it would be the chief interest of my life. Confess that the *Quietists* and the tender-hearted Fénelon could not love God with greater abnegation! There was a time when my mind would not have been so generous, but it answered the call of one who would have rejected with horror the empire of the world. What memories, my God, how sweet they are, and how cruel! Good-night, my friend. If, as I hope, I have news of you to-morrow, I shall add some more to this volume. For the last two days I have had less pain; I am having two chicken wings a day, and if this diet does not succeed better than the others, I shall take to milk for my sole nourishment.

Still Sunday, later, 9 October, 1774.

The good-bye was very hasty, very brusque, and you can well understand that I have still a thousand things to say to you, for if I am not mistaken, it is the last time I shall write to you. I shall know what to think to-morrow; I shall have news of you, my friend, I rely not on my desire but on your generosity. You certainly tell me you are going to your regiment; you have written the name of the place where it is stationed, twice, but thanks to the beauty of your writing, I have no idea of it: I read *Livorno*, and certainly that is not where you are going.[1]

My friend, write to me from wherever you are; you must make up to me for being deprived of writing to you. I am not quite sure that you have left to-day.

[1] It was Libourne, where M. de Guibert's regiment was going as garrison. [V-G.]

How could you refuse your Mother's request, especially if she is not yet convalescent, and one is still very ill if one is feverish ? In a word, I hope that you will not be wrong, and that I shall see you in a fortnight. A fortnight, it is a very long period ! I have known a shorter : oh, I shudder at it, what a dreadful memory ! It poisons even hope. I had a letter yesterday from his brother-in-law ; I did not care for him while my friend was alive ; since then he has become dear to me. How I should like to know his sister, to live with her ! He did not wish me to see her, he was afraid that I should strengthen the passion which consumed her. My friend, was not this fear the highest degree of passion, and of confidence in my affection ? Oh ! Heavens, and it was you who disturbed, overturned, the happiness of that tender and passionate mind. It was you who condemned us to awful misery, and it is you whom I love ! Yes, one loathes the ill one does, and yet one is carried away. I should have died of grief, and I am fated to live on it, to languish, to groan, to fear you, to love you, to curse life unceasingly, and yet to cherish some instants of it.

I have been interrupted ; someone came to suggest that I should go and see Duplessis ; he is a portrait-painter who will find a place by the side of Van Dyck. I do not know whether you have seen his portrait of the abbé Arnaud ; but, my friend, what you ought to see is his Glück ; it reached a degree of truth and perfection higher and better than nature. There were ten heads all of different types, I have seen nothing so fine and so true. M. d'Argental came in, he showed us a letter he had just had from M. de Voltaire ; I thought it so good, its tone so pleasing, so natural, that without thinking whether I was indiscreet or not, I asked for the letter, I asked if I might take a copy of it ; it is being done at this

moment, and my friend shall read it, and that thought is at the bottom of all my feelings. My friend, I would repeat what Sterne said to Lisette: "*your pleasure is my heart's first need.*"

Heavens, yes, it is difficult to begin a letter when people are sentimental wittily; still you must write to madame de Boufflers. She has not mentioned your name to me; I am not annoyed by that, but how can one fail to seize every opportunity of speaking of what gives one pleasure? There is a certain degree of friendship which makes one uncomfortable; that is what has prevented me from speaking of you to her; but she has never felt that kind of embarrassment, I am very sure; she has no need to love, she is so lovable.

My friend, I know myself so well, that I should be tempted to think that you are laughing at me, when you talk of my successes in the world. Good Heavens, it is eight years since I withdrew from the world. From the moment I loved, success would have disgusted me. Does one need to please when one is loved? Has one left an emotion, a desire which are not centred on the person one loves, and for whom one would like to live exclusively? My friend, you do not want as much as that, do you?

Letter 74

TO THE SAME

Monday, after the arrival of the post, 10 *October,* 1774.

No letter! Truly, if I had more confidence in your friendship, I should revenge myself by not writing to you either. Heavens, how can one so neglect, so forget the person who loves one? How can one be so busy, or so full of amusements, as not to give the first place

to comforting a sufferer ? In a word, how does one atone for a hurt deeply felt and bitter, and the memory of which nothing can drive away ? This thought will be with me until Saturday ; this grief will weigh upon my heart, it will make me feel in turn regret and remorse. But what does all this matter to you ? It is not *my* letters which you wait for, not *my* repose that occupies you. Well ! Let it be as you like. I am not displeased with *you*, but with myself and myself alone. Yes, my friend, I forgive you ; I love you ; you have hurt me, but you will cure me.

Here is a short letter which I add to my folios ; it is from the good Condorcet to his friend.

Letter 75

to m. de guibert

Friday evening, 14 *October*, 1774.

My friend, I have just left *Orpheus* : it has softened and calmed my heart. I have shed tears, but they had no bitterness : my grief was pleasant, my regrets were mingled with memories of you ; my thoughts dwelt on you without remorse. I wept for what I had lost, and I loved you ; my heart was large enough for it all. What charming, what divine, art ! The music was invented by a man of feeling who had to console the unhappy. How beneficent a balm are those enchanting chords ! My friend, when a disease is incurable, one must look only for sedatives, and for the needs of my heart there are only three in the whole of nature : you, my friend, you, the most effective of all, you who rouse me from my grief, who fill my heart with a kind of intoxication which deprives me of the faculty of memory and foresight. After this chief of all blessings,

the thing that I cherish as the support and resource of despair, is opium; I am not fond of it in any real sense, but it is necessary to me. Lastly, the thing which I find agreeable, the thing that charms my ills, is music; from it flow into my blood, into all that animates me, a sweetness and a sensibility so delicious that I could almost say that it makes me enjoy my regrets and my misfortunes. And this is so true that in the happiest periods of my life I did not value music so highly.

My friend, I had not been to *Orpheus* before you left; I had not needed to; I was with you, or had seen you, or was expecting you; that filled all my life; but in the void into which I have fallen, in the varied fits of despair which have agitated and overwhelmed my mind, I have sought aid from every resource I could. How weak they are! How powerless against the poison which consumes my life! But I must turn your attention from myself, and speak of you: I shall not have changed my objective.

M. Turgot has written to you; he has made amends, for he has begged you to do him a service, and I am quite sure that you will have seen it in that light. M. de Vaines said to me yesterday: "Do make M. de Guibert come back; he will enlighten us; he will be useful to us in matters on which we are ignorant and which we need." Alas! judge me, judge of my disposition: the first, the only, interest of my life is concerned, and I dare not have a decided opinion:

> And my sweetest desires are full of repentance.

Yes, virtue would say: come, arrive, and I die. But, my friend, a stronger voice, a deeper, a more intimate voice, calls to me: "when you see him, life will be a blessing; misery will become endurable"; and if even this thought was an error, if I was harbouring

an illusion, it would at least be the last, and I should owe it to you to have broken a bond which ought never to have been forged.

Last time, I wrote you a hasty note the moment I had learned that I had no letter from you; I was as annoyed by it as I was distressed, and I do not know whether I showed it you, for I was in such a hurry that I could not form my letters. The duc de la Rochefoucauld was waiting for me to go and dine with him. I found the comte de Crillon there, and his first words were: "You have done my commission, I have just had a letter from M. de Guibert in answer to yours." I was delighted; for it was to have news of you; but my letter was in the post; so you will have seen all my resentment.

The comte de Crillon, and all the Crillons in the world, were at the Opera this evening in the royal box; I was in my usual *room*. I gazed at the Comte's wife with all my eyes; she seemed to me to be ordinary and not ill-looking, but the light is so bad at the play! He came to see me in my box; he spoke of his business, and very little of his wife. A great fortune is a great responsibility; he has law-suits, business in America; I think he is most anxious that his *administration* should be good, even perfect. He will manage it, but here he is occupied incessantly, and with a kind of occupation from which more profit than glory results. No, happiness is not to be found in great wealth. Then where is it? Some very dull and very lonely learned men have it; so have good artisans fully employed in work that is lucrative and not very toilsome; so have good farmers who have a numerous and hard-working family, and who live in honest ease. All the rest of the world swarms with fools, idiots, or madmen, and in this last class are all the unhappy; I do not include the inhabitants of Charenton, for the sort of

madness which makes one believe oneself to be the Eternal Father is perhaps more worth having than wisdom and happiness.

I am sending you an extract from a letter written to the Swedish ambassador; you will see how elegantly foreigners speak French. Be assured that not a comma has been altered. But notice what horror one must feel for a religious order which uses such methods. My friend, neither burn, nor lose the letters you have received; there are some which you shall show me. I count on your letting me know that mine are in a safe place; so I say no more of them. I believe you and in you; how could you deceive me?

I am reading a bad book on the theatre, in which there are a quantity of good things; I am keeping it for you. Everyone is at Fontainebleau; and I am very glad. I could often write on my door what the scholar wrote: "*Those who come to see me do me honour; those who stay away give me pleasure.*"

M. de Marmontel offered to read me a new comic opera on Wednesday. He came, there were a dozen of us. So they formed a circle and I was all ready to listen to the *Old Bachelor*; that is the title of the work. The beginning of the first scene seemed to me muddled, embarrassed. Do you know what I did, without in the least wanting to? I did not hear a single word; and that is so true that I would have been hanged rather than tell the name of an actor, or the plot of the piece; and I got out of it, by telling the truth, namely that I had found the time very short. And indeed I was really astonished when I heard everyone talking. Well, since I find it impossible to give my attention to anything, I am madly fond of readings, for they leave me free; whereas in conversation, whatever one may do, one is too often called in by other people. Oh! Most tiresome of all are the people who show a preference

for one! There are two men who are so good as to think enough of me to whisper in my ear things which said aloud would be unimportant; I really need virtue to listen and to answer. My friend, it is no use your talking, I only enjoy conversation when either you or the chevalier de Chastellux are making it. By the way, he is very pleased with me. I have roused his friends' interest, and things are so well arranged that we only need the death of one of the Forty for him to be elected to the Academy. It is quite right, no doubt, but it was not without its difficulty. His interest, and pleasure and desire for this triumph, spurred me on. Heavens, Fontenelle is right: "*every age has its rattle*": only misfortune is old, and only passion reasonable. My friend, these are not paradoxes; think well and you will see that the argument can be sustained.

Good-night, it is time to let you breathe; I have written without a stop. The Opera days are my days of seclusion. I go there alone, come back home and my doors are shut. M. d'Alembert has been to see *Harlequin*; he likes it better than *Orpheus*; everyone is right, and I am far from criticising diversities of taste; everything is good. But good-bye now. Till to-morrow.

Letter 76

TO THE SAME

Saturday, 3.0 *p.m.*, 15 *October*, 1774, *after the post.*

I HAVE dined at home so as to have news of you an hour earlier; this answers your last letter: "*if you have not lost anything.*" But, my friend, you really distress

me when you do not say a single word about not having written to me by the last post. And yet you had to answer me; but as you feel very clearly that you have been in the wrong, you want to turn me from the subject by promising to do better in the future. It would be very nice of you, my friend; I thank you in anticipation. I do not dare to wish for your return, but I count the days of your absence. Heavens, how slow, how long, they are, how they weigh on my mind. How difficult, how impossible, even, it is, to distract oneself from the needs of one's heart. Books, society, friendship, indeed every imaginable resource, serve only to make one realise more fully the value and the power of what one is missing. I do not answer, but I do feel to the bottom of my heart what you tell me about M. de Mora.

M. d'Alembert has written to M. de Fuentès; he wrote of his own accord, and when he read me the letter, he wept and made me burst into tears. Heavens, these thoughts tear my heart-strings.

My friend, I want to think about you and justify to you the feelings which prompted me to burn your letters. I was reckoning on not surviving the sacrifice a single day, and at that moment my blood and my heart were frozen by despair. I did not feel my loss till more than six days afterwards. Oh! Twenty times, a hundred times, I have regretted having burned what you had written to me; nothing can repair the loss, and I am desolated by it. Well, yes, I consent, bring back my letters, we will burn them together.

Yes: M. Turgot is working at the forced labour problem. Good-bye, my friend. Are you not tired of reading this scribble?

Letter 77

TO THE SAME

Sunday evening, 16 *October*, 1774.

My friend, I did not answer your charming letter yesterday, and I shall never answer *as I should like* what you say about M. de Fuentès. Heavens, where can I find words to express a feeling which is quite new to my heart? You have filled me with the tenderest, the most lively, gratitude; yes, I think I have never owed so much to anyone. Indeed, your impulse, your sentiments, are noble and elevated like virtue: why then should I not take pleasure in adoring them? I do not know what the nature of my sentiments may be, but you are the object of them, and there are moments when I am ready to cry:

Eneas is in my heart, remorse is there no more.

Alas! I dare not utter those words; one could not deceive one's conscience, I feel sure. What turmoil arises within me! How wretched I am! My friend do you think it is possible that peace should come back to my heart, so long as I love you, or do you think it possible for me to be able to live without loving you? It is from you that I ask an account of myself; I no longer know myself; with a single word you change the disposition of my heart. I do not know whether that is because I am weakened by grief, or whether it is that my feeling has been strengthened by the care I have taken to combat and destroy it. If that is the case, you must admit that I have a very high opinion of myself. Oh, Heavens, how natural to me is passion, how foreign to me is virtue! My friend, never has anyone laid himself bare so utterly, but how could I conceal my most secret thoughts from you, they are

JULIE-JEANNE-ELEONORE DE LESPINASSE
1732-1776

Print after Carmontelle's Portrait (Musée de Chantilly)

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full of you. And how could I live if I had to reproach myself with having usurped your esteem or your good opinion ? No, my friend, see me as I am, and grant me, not what I deserve, but what I need to prevent me from dying of grief or to give me courage to do so ; for I still do not know which I should prefer to owe you, death or life ; both depend on you, and whatever your decision, I shall be grateful to you.

My friend, have you fully realised the force of those words : " *And my greatest misfortune would be to make you cold. You wished to lessen my tortures—etc. . . .*" Heavens, what a method you adopt ! But I will not go back to the past. I hope that you will not deceive me again, and if I am not what you love best, I shall at any rate see the place you leave me in your heart, and I promise that I will never claim more than you give me.

I have been to *Orpheus* again this evening, but I was with madame de Châtillon. It is true that I should have a very poor opinion of myself if I was not fond of her ; she asks for so little, she gives so much. I should like you to see and hear what she says to me ; they are the very words of passion ; but passion warms the heart, and I often feel very cold. I missed the comtesse de Crillon's visit, during the Opera, and I am annoyed at it ; because of my interest in her husband. I am eager to see her. I see him every day just as if he were not married.

Monday morning.

How can you think there is any question whether you ought to have left me in ignorance of your having a fever ? My friend, there is no need for you to be careful of *me* ; I love you too much not to prefer suffering with you and by you to anything else in the world. All those people who spare each other's feelings can hardly love each other ; there is a vast

distance between the sentiments which one commands oneself to have and those which command us: the former are perfect, and I detest them. If one day you became perfect like madame de B . . ., like the cold Grandisson, my friend, I should admire you but I should be radically cured. . . . I am interrupted by madame de Châtillon; she asks leave to add some words to this: I am offering her paper and ink, but my letter—that is impossible. Forgive me, my friend.

Monday, after the post.

You have been alarmed; you are still sad. Heavens, how I suffer from everything that causes you suffering, and how distressed I am at having added anxiety to your indisposition! Yes, I am blameworthy. I am weak, I condemn myself, I hate myself, but that does not repair the harm I have done you. You learned by the next post that my fever was only the result of the violent state of my mind. My mechanism is no longer strong enough to endure its shocks. My friend, never pity me; say to yourself "she is mad," and the thought will calm you, and if you do not suffer, I shall be happy. But I hope that you will tell me carefully and in detail all the news of your patients; it is horrible to know fear for what one loves; that kind of torture is more than my reason and my strength can stand. Heavens, yes, you must stay with your parents; your departure will be a great evil to them, and you must spare them it so long as they have to be careful about their health. When one is in that condition, anything that rouses one's sensibility becomes painful; but I have nothing to say to you, you see things more clearly than I, and your feelings are more delicate than mine. My friend, I am almost displeased that you do not find it pleasant to make me share your state of mind, especially when it is painful to you; that is just the

time when I should like you to say, but with the opposite meaning, what Montaigne said: "*I seem to be stealing his share.*" Yes, my friend, you ought no longer to be free to suffer alone. Alas I am so perfectly attuned to every suffering, it speaks so precisely my own language, that I think it is not even necessary to count on my affection to find consolation in bemoaning oneself to me.

Good-bye, my friend, I was counting on telling you a thousand nothings, but your sadness deprives me of the strength to do so; it is vain to say: "his disposition will have changed by now"; but the one he was in has gained my heart, it will not change until he wishes it. What an ascendancy! What strength! What power! It would act at a thousand miles' distance. I told you so: it is the only thing that men have not been able to spoil. My friend, if it was lost from the world, be very sure that so long as I live you know where it lives, where it rules, with more energy than a Frenchwoman can be expected to have.

Letter 78

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Fontneuve, near Montauban,
Wednesday morning, 19 *October,* 1774.

My friend, things go better, they go well. I am tranquil. How angry I am now that I let you know of my agitation. You will have been anxious for three days. You see whether I doubt your sharing my burdens. Oh! can I doubt it? You are the most generous, the most lovable, the most perfect creature in the world.

I return to our troubles. They have been great. The hours pass very slowly to a family which suffers,

which watches, and trembles; a house full of doctors, the sacraments, the whole apparatus of death, this is what I have had before my eyes. And shall I confess it? Yes, I will tell it to you to whom I tell everything: it was not only the dying woman who was before my eyes, and in my thoughts; I was recalled to her by the despair of my father, and my sisters. All their grief came back upon me. In such a case, do not imagine that it is the strongest or the most sensitive who consoles; but he suffers over again for the others; his heart seems to multiply itself so as to feel everything.

It was on Sunday that I wrote to you—My mother was very ill then. She was ill all Monday too. At last during the night, the night which we thought must be stormy, perhaps fatal, a turn came for the better, her head became clearer, her pulse beat less rapidly, yesterday it was normal; in a word, that made all the difference between death and life. The convalescence will take some time, but what is time compared with the terrible *for ever?* You can well believe, my friend, that by *terrible* I refer to the survivors. But am I not cruel? Could your most mortal enemy be more so? All my details rend your heart-strings. Oh! they first tortured my mind thus. I share with you, my friend, or rather, I make you share with me.

Let us now speak of consoling, pleasant things: I mean your letters. I have had two during this terrible crisis, and one to-day; I shall not answer everything they contain. I shall only answer to-day by a single word, a cry: *I love you.* Every day your friendship gains fresh rights over me; no, my friend, I am wrong; it does not gain them; it has been almost from the first what it is to-day. I will compare it to the sea which is always receiving, but cannot increase.

The comte de Crillon has written to me. He seems happier than one ought to be when one becomes rich.

He must be in love. M. de Vaines has also written me a letter full of good feeling and truth. I think this last virtue is particularly his.

So I am a *Mathanasias*? Call me what they used to call Scaliger: a *hypercritic*. But what name would you give to the chevalier de Chastellux, who, so I am informed, finds the *Eulogy* of *Monsieur* La Harpe detestable? That was his impression of *Iphigenia*, and *Orpheus*. He is very extreme in his judgments; but I prefer that fault to the taste which has awoken in him for the Court, for princes, their *lever*, their *coucher*, their *végéter*.

Good-bye. I do not want to miss the post. I shall read and re-read your letters; I shall have a thousand things to say to you. But one thing I do not want to put off till another time: it is that I see that my departure will only be delayed three or four days at most. I shall stay with the Legion only three or four days; as short as time as possible at Bordeaux; at Chanteloup and at Ruffec, as the briefest of stages. I shall indeed be burning with eagerness to arrive, to see you, to see you again, never to tire of it.

But for your chicken-wings, oh! I beg of you, digest them. I should not like to see you on a diet of milk. You have no need to weaken yourself; and then as for the pylorus, I think you must keep it open.

Good-bye, my friend.

Letter 79

to M. de Guibert

Friday evening, 21 *October*, 1774.

My friend, how slowly time slips away. Since Monday I have been bored to tears by it, and there is nothing I

have not tried to cheat my impatience. I have been always on the go, I have been everywhere, seen everything, and had only one thought; to a sick mind nature has only one colour, all objects are covered with crape. Tell me, how does one manage to distract oneself? How does one manage to console oneself? From you alone can I learn to endure life, you alone can still bring it into the charm mingled with grief which makes one alternately cherish and detest existence.

My friend, I shall have a letter from you to-morrow; it is only this hope that gives me strength to write to you this evening. You will tell me whether you are reassured as to the health of her who is dear to you; you will perhaps speak to me of your return; in a word, you will speak to me; and if only you knew how destitute and abandoned I feel when I know nothing of you! How short that little letter was! How sad it was, how cold! I think that when you told me that you had been anxious and even alarmed you did not tell me everything? What was the matter then? Would you conceal your heart from me? Would you like once more to rend mine in pieces? Have you not said that you would tell me everything, that you would have unreserved confidence in me; that I was your friend; that your heart would pour itself out into mine; that you would make me live on all your impulses; that even what might wound my heart should not be concealed from me? My friend, learn to know me well; see what I am to you, and, with that knowledge, I answer for it that you will find it impossible to conceive the plan of deceiving me, or even of hiding anything from me.

Saturday morning.

I left you yesterday in order to spare your feelings; I was so unhappy. I had just come in from *Orpheus*.

That music makes me mad; it carries me away, I cannot now miss a day of it; my heart is greedy for that kind of pain. Heavens, how little in tune I am with all my surroundings! And yet never ought one to cherish friendship so dearly. My friends are excellent people; their care, their interest, never tire, and I fail to understand what they can find in me to attach them to me. It is my misery, my anxiety, what I say, what I do not say, that animate and rouse them. Yes, I see it clearly, kind and sensitive minds love the unhappy, men like to find that they can feel, and the ills of others are measured out just so that one can sympathise without suffering. Well! I can promise them that pasturage so long as my life lasts.

My friend, I wanted to tell you last time that you ought to take rooms in the same boarding-house as the chevalier d'Aguesseau; that would save you the trouble of going to look for them; it would be convenient for you, and I should be certain that you would not leave my part of the town. Yes, it is always personal interest which covers everything, which animates everything, and the fools or knaves who attacked Helvétius have no doubt never loved, or reflected. Good Heavens, how many people live and die without having felt the one or known the other. So much the better for them, and so much the worse for us; yes, so much the worse; for I cannot express to you the disgust, the utter disgust which I feel within myself, I do not say only for fools, but for people who are so like myself that I foresee everything they are going to say when they open their mouths! Oh! I am very ill! I can no longer endure people who resemble me; everything that is on my own level seems to me too small; I must be made to raise my eyes to look, otherwise I am tired and bored. My friend, society now offers me only two interests: I must love, or gain

enlightenment; mere intelligence is not enough, one must have a great deal. This is as much as to tell you that I no longer listen to more than five or six people, or read more than five or six books. However, there are more people than that who have claims upon me, but that is through affection and confidence, and in no way alters my disposition so far as the generality are concerned. This is the result: everything that is less than myself stifles and stuns me; things that are on my own level bore and weary me; only things that are higher than myself can sustain me and tear me out of myself, and I shall always say, with the ancient: *My friends, save me from myself.* All of which proves that vanity is thoroughly extinct in me, but is replaced by a universal and mortal disgust.

The comtesse de Boufflers has not reached this point, so she is very amiable. I have seen a great deal of her this week; she came to dinner at Mme Geoffrin's on Wednesday; she was charming; every sentence she uttered was a paradox; she was attacked, and defended herself with so much wit that her errors were almost as good as the truth. For instance, she considers that it is a great misfortune to be an ambassador, it matters not of what country or to what nation; to her it seems nothing more than a dreadful exile, etc., etc. And then she told us that at the time when she was fondest of England she would only have consented to settle there on condition that she might bring with her twenty-four or twenty-five of her intimate friends, and sixty or eighty other people, who were absolutely necessary to her; and it was most seriously, and above all with the greatest sensibility that she told us of the needs of her heart! But I should have liked you to see the astonishment she caused Lord Shelburne. He is simple, natural, he has a serious mind, strength of character, no taste or attraction

but for what is like himself, at any rate in naturalness. He has been to see M. de Malesherbes ; and came back enchanted. He said to me : " I have seen for the first time in my life a thing I did not think could exist : a man whose mind is absolutely free from fear or hope, and who is yet full of life and warmth. Nothing in nature can trouble his peace of mind, nothing is necessary to him, and he is intensely interested in everything that is good. In a word," he added, " I have travelled much, and never brought back with me so deep an impression. If I do anything good in all the remainder of my life, I am sure my heart will be animated by the memory of M. de Malesherbes."

My friend, that is a fine eulogy, and the maker of it is assuredly an interesting man. I think he is very lucky to be born an Englishman, and to be leader of a party. I have seen much of him, and listened to him ; he has intelligence, warmth, high-mindedness. He reminded me a little of the two men in the world whom I have loved, and for whom I would live or die. He is going in a week, and I am glad of it : he has been the cause of my dining every day in a company of fifteen, for so society functions were arranged, and that tires me even more than it interests me. I need rest, my mechanism is broken down. Good-bye, my friend ; I await the post. That is what is necessary to me.

Letter 80

to the same

Saturday after the post, 22 *October*, 1774.

Heavens how worried and afflicted I am at what you tell me ! I believe everything that I fear, so imagine whether I share your suffering. Now it is that I find

separation absolutely unendurable! My friend, your ills are mine, and it is dreadful not to be able to relieve you. If I were with you, I think I should make myself so fully mistress of all your fears, of all that makes you tremble, that you would have left only things which it would be impossible for me not to take away from you. Sharing would not be enough; I would suffer by you, for you, and with such tenderness, such passion, that every grief would be assuaged, and every terror calmed.

Heavens, how miserable I am! The only moment of my life when my affection could have done you any good, I am condemned to be useless to you. Everyone who cares for you will say what I do, and no doubt better than I; I am too close to you to express what I feel. Are there words to express all the emotions of a suffering heart, a heart stricken with terror, which grief has forbidden to have any hope? My friend, in this state of mind one can only explain and express oneself by these words: *I love you*. If only they could reach your heart as I feel them! Yes, whatever be your misery, you would have a feeling of pleasure. Now it is that I have a mortal regret for what is lacking in your affection for me. My friend, we would draw consolation from it; the remedy would be side by side with the evil. When one is unhappy, then it is dreadful to love only feebly, for it is in ourselves that we find true strength, and nothing gives us that so much as passion. The feelings of another please us, touch us; only our own can sustain us. But most people lack this resource, almost everything that exists loves only because it is loved. Heavens, how poor a way, how small and weak it leaves one! But that has nothing to do with our will, or our thoughts. So it would be as insane to try to rouse love, as to strive to extinguish it. So let us stay what we are, until nature, or I know not what, ordains otherwise.

But it is too good of you, a thousand times too good, to occupy yourself with my ills. Suffering has become my existence; still I am better since I have had chicken for my sole nourishment; I have less pain. The *pylorus* disputes the passage less vehemently to chickens, and that is as it should be: they are the best people in the world, always ready to be quartered for everyone; they have won me over completely, and I exhort you to like them in preference to that brute of an ox who is overpoweringly heavy. Good-bye, my friend; I speak of myself, and think only of you. From now until Monday, I shall be on tenter-hooks. You will write to me, I firmly believe.

Letter 81

to mlle de lespinasse

Fontneuve, near Montauban,
Saturday evening, 22 October, 1774.

My friend, I have answered your letters of the 9th and the 14th. And even if I had not to answer you, I should still write. It is not what you say to me that makes me talk to you; that barrenness, which resembles the conversation of people in society, will never exist between you and me. You need my letters, be sure your need will always be satisfied, I find my pleasure in it, and is not pleasure the prime motive, the chief bond of every affection?

It is not morality, honesty, gratitude, that make me love you; my feelings come from myself, and I think they would exist even without yours. You fill me with joy when you tell me that they are the most efficacious of all the opiates that assuage the pain. It will never fail you, will always be at your service,

and will not have vexatious results like that fatal opium which only charms away your ills to irritate them afterwards ; I would you would sacrifice it for me.

Opium is only made, my friend, for people who are afraid to be in their own presence, for those who have no other hearts on which to lean. Are you in such a case ? Have not you friends whose happiness is intimately bound up with your existence ? Have you not *me*, first of all ? Do you not feel me always near you ? Yes, you must feel my presence, even now when a hundred and fifty leagues separate us, for I think of you, my mind is full of you.

Talking of music, I recommend it to you ; I cannot imagine how I could live so long without loving it, and above all how it was that I did not love it when I was unhappy. The reason was that for long I heard nothing but our French plain-song, and not one of its chords appealed to my heart. It was *Iphigenia*, *Orpheus*, which created a new sense in me. I shall enjoy them deliciously this winter ; I shall enjoy them with you in that *chamber* where I heard so little of the *Village Sorcerer* and *Vertumnus and Pomona*.

My friend, though an additional sense may perhaps be a cause of privation and sometimes a door open to grief, I love everything which makes me live more fully. I have often said :

> I would I could strengthen still more the energy of my feelings ; I would I could increase my life by making new senses for myself.

But how does the chevalier de Chastellux like your taste for *Orpheus*, when he considered that opera a hundred times worse even than *Iphigenia ?* But perhaps you do not speak to him about it, and you do well. If I am not greatly mistaken the Chevalier never brings to bear on what he hears, or says, or writes, the

sense of the soul, that chief of all senses, which is barbarously not reckoned among the other five, but for which I would none the less give, I think, all the five together, because it alone would make up for them. He has nevertheless a good heart, has the Chevalier; but the heart and the soul are two distinct things in a language, and this is what makes love very common but passion very rare.

On the other hand, as it is clearly proved that of all qualities a *soul* is the least necessary for an academician, as the Chevalier has intelligence, knowledge, even erudition, and has written works which do him honour, I think it is perfectly right to give him the first vacant seat. Besides, the *bauble* will transport him with delight. He thinks he has got it already, and has rushed to tell the secret at La Bretèche; it has been told me on the same condition, and that it should go no further than you.

So the comte de Crillon is married irretrievably. A wife, a great fortune: what shackles on one's liberty! He had fifteen thousand francs a year, and was free: if only I had as much!

I want him to be happy; but it seems to me that on the day of the opera he talked too much to you of his fortune and too little of his wife. He has written me a letter full of friendship, but by the hand of a secretary, for he was already so overwhelmed by business worries that his hand was no longer free.

And I too shall have to marry! I shall have to, good Heavens! The comte de Crillon had fifteen thousand francs a year, and I have half that; he was at his ease, but I am in debt: everything attached him to Paris, while in my present position everything drives me from it. My father will not come to Paris until January. He has a scheme of marriage for me which would settle me in the country. I will tell you my

whole situation; you will advise me; you will help me. If I am forced to decide on marriage, I should like it to come through you. My fate would not then separate you from me. In any event, I am far from having an easy mind; I am far from happiness, and I can foresee nothing which can bring me near it.

M. Turgot has written me a very courteous letter; he had included me, he said, among the people to whom he wished to reply *with his heart and his hand.* He asks me for information on our military expenses as compared with those of other powers, and here is my answer. I love to have myself judged by you; you know how to criticise without wounding me; your friendship always anoints the edge of the glass with honey.

Good-bye, my friend. My mother is getting better slowly; there is still a trace of fever left; she keeps her bed. But since her state is not serious I shall not be prevented from leaving at the end of the month, on the 30th at latest. You cannot write to me here any longer; write to me at Bordeaux. I shall stop there some time. I shall pay a flying visit to Libourne where the Legion is; in a word I shall arrive as soon as I can. I count the days. Can you then be more to me than my family? I take up your letters again, read them over once more. My friend, how good you are! How lovable! What a soul *you* have! Your worldly success, the worship of your friends, your Lord Shelburne, all these I do not reckon as part of your wealth, for, once more, I do not love you because it is the fashion to love you. I love you because you carry me away. Farewell again, my compliments to M. d'Alembert, to the comte de Crillon, to the Chevalier, to M. de Vaines, to all who speak to you of me.

For a week I have wanted to write to Mme. de Boufflers. With her I can never begin, while I can never end with you.

Letter 82

TO M. DE GUIBERT, COLONEL IN COMMAND OF THE CORSICAN LEGION AT MONTAUBAN-IN-QUERCY

Sunday evening, 23 October, 1774.

My friend, I must talk to you to calm myself, to free myself from a thought which hurts me. I await the hour of to-morrow's post with an impatience which you alone, perhaps, can conceive. Yes, you understand me, if you cannot answer me, and that is something ; it would no doubt be sweeter, more consoling, if this were a dialogue, but a monologue is endurable when one can say to oneself : I am talking all by myself, but yet I am understood.

My friend, my physical condition is detestable ; I attribute it to the *hemlock :* it has kept, I think, some of the properties of a poison. I feel a weakness, an anguish which has made me think twenty times to-day that I was going to lose consciousness, and at this very moment I am inexpressibly at ease. I feel what Fontenelle a little before his death called : *a great difficulty in living*. But the feeling that animates my mind gives me the strength to talk to you, for in truth I have not moved or spoken all day. I do not know whether I have said anything to you about the Crillons : I have seen much of them this last week ; the count is intoxicated with happiness ; he told me that if his wife was ruined, he would still think he had made an excellent bargain. She pleases him and suits him in every way. What happiness ! And how delighted I am at it ! I have told you that her face was ordinary, but I think she is intelligent ; her manner is obliging and she is very anxious to please. Still such as she is, I would not think her good enough to be the wife of the man whom I love best in the world. My

friend, I am more sure of it than ever: no man who has talent and genius and is called to a career of glory, ought to marry. Marriage is a real extinguisher of everything that is great, and that can be brilliant. If one is honourable and sensitive enough to make a good husband, one is nothing more, and no doubt that would be enough if happiness is to be found there. But there is a man whom nature has destined to be great, and not to be happy.

Diderot has said that nature when she creates a man of genius, shakes her torch over his head, saying, "Be a great man, and be miserable." Those, I think, are the words she uttered on the day of your birth. Good-night, I am exhausted; till to-morrow—

Monday, after the post.

No letter—That, with any other man, would make me tremble; but I am a little reassured when I tell myself that it is not in you to be consistent and punctual. So I hope that you are not more unhappy; I only know that you have not felt the need to reassure me on that point; it is very natural, but distressing. My friend, I do not reproach you; my only complaint against you is that, whatever your situation, your mind does not turn to me.

Good-bye, I am worn out, and in an extraordinary state of weakness; it is an effort to hold my pen. I shall no longer expect news of you, but I shall desire it as long as I draw breath.

Letter 83

Tuesday evening, 25 October, 1774.

I have been unjust; it would be a wrong towards anyone, but with you I reproach myself for it is a

crime. Forgive me, my friend: I owed you thanks, and I have accused you! The thought hurts me as though I were guilty, and yet it is the post which was to blame, and I suspected it so little that when they gave me my letters to-day I did not even look at the bottom of the pile, so little did I care where I began or ended. My friend, at the second letter I opened, I cried out: it was your writing; my heart beat violently. If it is a very painful ill to wait *without seeing a thing come;* it is a very lively and sensible pleasure to be thus surprised.

My friend, I love you madly; everything tells me so, proves it, and often more clearly than I could wish. I give you more than you want; you do not need to be so loved, while I needed rest, that is, death. But I think too much of myself, I occupy you with myself, while I ought only to speak to you of the pleasure I felt as I read these words: "*things go better, they go well, I am calm.*" My friend, I breathed more freely; I think that gave me back life and strength; for three days I had been annihilated; they told me it was nerves, but I who know more about it than my doctor, think it was you. I am like *Lucas:* "I explain *everything in terms of my craft of gardening.*" Heavens, how can I endure what I feel, and suffer. And yet my heart has only two emotions: one consumes me with grief, and when I give myself up to the one which ought to calm me, I am pursued by remorse and by a regret yet more lacerating than the tortures of remorse. Still myself! How I hate myself for everlastingly coming back to the subject! But I will get away from it by telling you that I adore your sensibility and your truth. Never hide anything from me; you gain too much by letting me see all the emotions which animate you.

My friend, in a situation just like that in which you

have just been, but which had more fatal results, M. de Mora let me know, almost in the same words, what he had felt at the death-bed of his mother. The grief which most tore his heart-strings was for his father, and so true is that, that he made me weep more over the condition of M. de Fuentès, than over the death of this lady, a slow and painful death. Heavens, I have already told you never to think of treating me gently, of sparing me ; be sure that my affection leads me farther than you will ever be able to make me go. My friend, it is good to see convalescence so close ; but whatever you may say, you will stay longer than you think, because assuredly you will do nothing dishonourable, but you will certainly be guilty of thoughtlessness : you will forget to tell me not to write again, or to write to you on your way. And then, when the letters do not come, you will accuse me, or perhaps you will be good enough to be anxious, and a little forethought would have avoided all that.

Nothing is so amusing as the life, so full, so complete, of all princes : your phrase is more concise, and even more profound, than Tacitus : *the végéter*. The chevalier de Chastellux is at present at Chanteloup. He can do anything, and thinks a great deal of this method of multiplying oneself infinitely. He is so rich and so generous, that he disdains to harvest, sowing is enough for him ; he receives nothing, he goes on his way giving everywhere and to everyone. He told me the other day that his pleasure was to attract notice. That is more naive than the style of M. *de* La Harpe ; it is no use, you always deprive him of something : the *de* would not have scalded your mouth.

M. de Chamfort has come. I have seen him, and we shall see one day soon his *Eulogy of La Fontaine*. He returns from the waters in good health, far richer

in glory and in wealth, and dowered with four lady-friends who, each of them, love him like four: they are mesdames de Gramont, de Rancé, d'Amblimont, and the comtesse de Choiseul. The assortment is as parti-coloured as Harlequin's cloak, but it is so much the more piquant, the more agreeable, the more charming. So, I answer for it, M. de Chamfort is a young man highly pleased with himself, and he does his very best to be modest. M. Grimm is back; I have overwhelmed him with questions. He paints the Czarina, not as a sovereign, but as an amiable woman, full of intelligence, wit, and everything that can fascinate and charm. In everything he said to me I recognised rather the charming arts of a Greek courtesan than the dignity and brilliance of the empress of a great empire.

But another type of a greater painter has come back to us: Diderot; he has sent word that I shall see him to-morrow. I shall be very pleased, but in my present disposition he is the one man in the world whom I should least wish to see constantly. He forces one's attention: and assuredly that is what I cannot and will not grant for any length of time to anyone in the world. When I say *anyone*, you must understand that it means that I do not want to be distracted from the one who fills all my thoughts. How clumsy this explanation is! But then you are stupid: one has to shout anything one wants to make you understand. My friend, be brave; for I think that this time you will have the whole quire of paper without missing out a single page. You shall put off the reading of it until you are in the coach; I shall have filled your journey, and you will find me at the end of it. What! Do you really think that you will be very glad to see me? How amiable is what you say! How pleasant it would be, indeed, to be loved by you! But my heart could

never again reach such heights of happiness ; it would be too much. A few moments, a few flashes, of pleasure, are enough for the unnhappy : they breathe again and take fresh courage to suffer.

Letter 84

TO THE SAME

Wednesday, 26 *October*, 1774.

I have just re-read your letter ; there is one sentence in it which delights me ; it had escaped my notice : when you say : " *I return to our troubles* ". My friend, if I am mistaken, do not correct me ; but at present I fear the results for you of so much anxiety, so little sleep ; will you not be ill ? I die of fear at the thought. Oh ! Only tell me on what thought I am to dwell so as to breathe in peace ? On the moment of your arrival ? No, no, my friend, it makes me tremble ; and I dare not even desire it, and, if it were delayed, I think I should die. Can you imagine such excessive inconsistency ? The excess is not the result of false reasoning, but it comes from a mind tossed by the most contrary emotions, which you might perhaps understand, but could not share.

I am interrupted, and again by madame de Châtillon. I am beginning to think that the first of all qualities to make oneself loved, is to be loving. Now, you cannot imagine all the things she thinks of to reach my heart. My friend, if only you loved me as she does ! No, I should not wish it ; Heaven preserve me from knowing such happiness twice !

Friday, 28 *October*, 1774.

What do you think of this *invocation ?* Does it not seem to you to be that of a lunatic ? My friend, it

comes of an honourable feeling. I have offended M. de Mora and yet I find a kind of pleasure in thinking that he alone will have made me know happiness ; that to him alone I shall owe it that I have felt for a few moments the whole possible value of life. Indeed, sometimes, I think myself less blameworthy because I feel that I have been punished ; and you can quite see that if I was loved, all this would be abolished, and upset. I must at least cling to virtue through remorse, and to the man who loved me through my regret for his loss. The regret is very lively, very painful ; a few days ago it caused me the convulsions of despair.

I have been forced to go and see *Lekain* in *Tancred* ; I had not seen him since he reached perfection, and did not bother about it. At last I went : the first two acts bored me completely : the third is full of interest, which steadily increases towards the end ; in the fifth act, there were moments and phrases which made me transfer the scene to *Bordeaux*, and, without exaggeration, I thought I should die ; I lost consciousness, and all night I had to be watched, because I had repeated fainting-fits. I could not tell you about it these last few days, I was too close to the impression I had received from it ; I have promised myself definitely not to go any more in search of such dreadful shocks. *Orpheus* is the only play I can endure and I see regretfully that you will not see it again ; there is a new opera on November 8th ; the music is by Floquet ; the stupid public will perhaps like it ; after the good, it will applaud the mediocre, and even the detestable.

At last M. Dorat has won success : it is indeed public opinion which makes reputations, but a public opinion tested by time, for that of the moment has never the taste or the intelligence which put the seal on what is to be handed down to posterity.

My friend, I am going to send this letter to be franked, and to make the packet more imposing, I am adding the latest news-sheets ; not because they are good, but because they are new, and, besides, you read everything. Bring me back Linguet's broadside. Everyone is at Fontainebleau, but the Barons de Koch and Gleichen are still with us, and I find that they stay too late in the evening for me ; I do not know whether I am wrong, but I think solitude would be good for me ; society hardly ever interests me, and almost always bores me. What a bad patient I am ! It is no use turning over, I am always ill. Good-bye, my friend.

I have just seen the comte de Crillon : Diderot would say that he is *under the spell*, and I, because I am fond of him, am delighted at it, and told him this evening that it was bad air he was coming to breathe, and that, in the intoxication of happiness which made up his life, it was in order to do a work of charity that he came to see me, that I should always be for him something like the statues which some philosophers kept to remind them to be good and just. You will come to see me, I said, and as you leave you will say : misery is nailed down upon the earth. Your heart will be touched and mine will have enjoyed your happiness. He is expecting his friend the Prince de Salm ; I do not know whether he is a man of wit—but I know better things of him : he is sensitive and honourable ; his letters to his friend leave no doubt of it. But it is the good Condorcet's letters that are really charming ! If I gave way to my first inclination, I should tell you all my feelings about them, and then I check myself, and say : he will come back, I will make him read them : he will laugh at me, he will think me fanatical. Well, I shall be wrong, but he will be

there. My friend, on those conditions I would agree to lack common sense all the rest of my life: but I wager you would be far more difficult to please than I am, you would desert me; I should find myself back among the crowd, and stupidity consoles one for everything.

I expect that all this time the *Gracchi* have been quite forgotten; you will come back to them with all the greater warmth and interest. My friend, note the transition, stupidity leads to me genius, and the step is very natural: it is M. Turgot, after the abbé Terray. There are cases when degrees and intermediaries must vanish.

I do not know what to do with the time between now and Saturday; I want to make it weigh a little heavily on you, by compelling you to listen to me. I hope for, and promise myself, a long letter on Saturday. If I were mistaken! If only it was no more than four pages long! In truth I should complain.

My friend, you see that good fortune turns my head; I become almost impertinent because I have had news of you to-day. What is certain, is that if anyone could be in my secret, he would know from my health, from my whole way of life, whether I have had a letter from you. Yes, the circulation of my blood is sensibly quickened by it, and then I find it impossible to take part in anything. What I cannot get used to, is the redoubled interest that causes in my friends. Heavens, would they pity me, if they could see to the bottom of my heart? Is not such usurpation very criminal! My friend, do not give me a false conscience; tell me that I am blameworthy, pity me, console me; you have led me only too far astray.

I want to send you a letter which I read to-day before yours; if I could have guessed, that would not have been the order of my reading. You will see from this

letter whether I have suffered by your absence. Yes, I have made M. d'Alembert anxious. The man who is writing to me has never known a word of what filled my mind; he thinks me the victim of virtue and prejudice; but he sees that for three years I have been so unhappy that he is often tempted to think me out of my mind. And, indeed, he spends his life in making epigrams about me; but, in truth, the point is always a phrase of sentiment, or resentment. Read it, recognise it: assuredly he is a wit.

Letter 85

TO THE SAME

Sunday, 30 *October*, 1774.

I HEARD of it too late: there is an enormous packet by to-day's post. When I received your letter, I had already sent to M. Turgot to get mine franked. I was reckoning on writing a word to you after the postman had come, by the ordinary route, but never mind, I hope my volume will not be lost; it will be sent on to you, and all the more carefully since M. Turgot's name appears on it.

Really I think it is easy to criticise you without wounding you; but it is not so easy to praise you as I feel, as you would deserve to be praised, without running the risk of being thought very extravagant, very dull and very monotonous. Well, I will let myself go, and tell you bluntly that your letter to M. Turgot is admirable, perfect; it is the very mood, the very measure; in a word it is *you*, and I know nothing better or greater in nature. I told you, my friend, that henceforward I could never again look at anything which did not make me raise my eyes; but you are so high that I could only reach you at last by an effort

too great for me. To recuperate myself, I shall do as did Magdalene ; she had chosen her place at the feet of Jesus Christ while he lived among men. My friend, I must not be more difficult to please, or more dainty, than so great a saint, and you cannot for your part pride yourself on greater modesty than the God-Man to whom I compare you. If the comparison seems mad to you, remember that I love madness.

But, my friend, what are you about, what emotion are you letting yourself follow ? Do you realise that you praise me as if you had to please me ? Well, good Heavens, do you forget that in that respect your fortune is made ? It is among the fortunes of which no one can know the limits : those of the Beaujons, Clives, la Bordes, etc. How I should like you really to have a fortune, not like that of the wretches whom I have just named : they die of boredom in the midst of their wealth ; but I should like you to be comfortably off ; I should like you not to be compelled to work your talents to death, to strangle your genius ; in a word, I should like you not to be forced to come down again among the crowd. Yes, honestly, it is only for your own sake, because of my interest in your fame, that I dread marriage, and in this matter I can say to you with truth :

Light is not clearer than the depth of my heart.

All this said, my friend, if there was an excellent match, if you had any views, if I or my friends could help you, you can count on the zeal, activity and passion we should employ to ensure success. Yes, I should once more know happiness and pleasure, if I could see you happy, were it the happiness—the same kind of happiness, I mean—of the comte de Crillon. Oh ! What a good husband he will be ! He did well to go round the world before he married ; his wife is,

I think, the end of the world to him ; his thoughts go no farther. But my friend, he will not write the *Gracchi*, be could not even make up the pretty verses which I read in your letter ! This need to *live strongly*, is, I think, the need of the damned. Which recalls to me a passionate expression which gave me much pleasure : " If ever ", they said to me, " I could become calm again, then indeed I should think myself on the rack."

Such language can only be used by people endowed with that sixth sense, a *soul*. Yes, my friend, I am fortunate, or unlucky, enough, to have the same dictionary as you. I understand, or rather I feel, your distinctions, your definitions, while three parts of the time I do not understand the chevalier de Chastellux. He is so pleased with what he has done, he knows so well all that he is going to do, he is so fond of reason, in a word he is so perfectly collected in everything, that a hundred times I have thought I was making a mistake when I spoke or wrote to him, and was about to utter or to write ; the chevalier Grandisson ; but without envying the lot of Clementine or Mlle. Gléon.

You know that the comte de Broglie is in command at Metz, in place of M. de Conflans. My friend, if you want a man of wit, there he is ; but I would he could be useful to you, you who have not his wit. And talking of wit, I will tell you a saying of the Czarina's to Diderot. They often argued ; one day when the argument was hotter than ever, the Czarina stopped, saying : " We are too excited to be reasonable ; you have a lively imagination, mine is heated, we should not know what we were saying." " With this difference ", said Diderot, " that you could say anything you liked without impropriety, but I might fail." " Fie ! " replied the Czarina, " is there any difference between man and man ? "

My friend, consider, read carefully, and do not be so stupid as M. d'Alembert, who saw in that merely a difference of sex, whereas it is charming only inasmuch as it is a sovereign speaking to a philosopher, a chief of a sect, etc.

Another time, she said to him: "Sometimes I think you a hundred, often, too, a child of twelve." My friend, that is pleasant, that is pretty, and is the image of Diderot. If you liked children, I would tell you that I think I have noticed that everything that gives pleasure up to a certain point has some analogy with children; they have so many graces, such mellowness, such naturalness. In a word, Harlequin is a mixture of cat and child, and was there ever such grace? Do you know what annoys me about the packet that will run after you? It is that you will receive too late my request for pardon for unjustly accusing you; the post was to blame, and, despite myself, I was its accomplice. But it is you or the post that are to blame this time? You tell me: "*I answer your letters of the 9th and 14th.*" Why do you skip over the 11th, which was a Tuesday? I have written by every post since that period when I was mad with the most fatal of madnesses.

My friend, you are missing a great day, that of the return of the Parliament. The curious promise themselves great pleasure; *wise* people, like me, do not think about this first moment; it is the results, the consequences, of this event that are of great interest. It is a question of learning whether those who are about to take their place once more on the *fleur-de-lys* are judges or tyrants.

Oh! Why do I not talk of *Orpheus* to the chevalier de Chastellux? My friend, for the same reason that it would be barbarous to talk of colours at the Blind Hospital. Good-bye.

Letter 86

TO THE SAME

Monday, 11.0 *p.m.*, 1 *November*, 1774.

My friend, I think you have claims on every emotion and every feeling of my mind. I owe you an account of all my thoughts; I seem only to be able to assure myself of their propriety by communicating them to you; so listen, and judge my judgment, or rather my instinct, for that is all I have in matters of the intelligence, of taste and of art. Yes, my friend, the Academy of Marseilles has been only just to crown M. de Chamfort. Heavens, how far below his seems the eulogy which had given me much pleasure, and will again. How rich is his, how full of wit of every kind, of shrewdness, strength, elevation, philosophy. How lively the style, how animated, how flowing; how full of apt expressions! How original are the attitude, the treatment! In one word, I am charmed by it, so much so that if I was not afraid of spoiling your pleasure, I would quote you a dozen touches each more piquant then the last.

My friend, I recommend page 44 to you. Tell me, am I wrong? Is it not full of the most exquisite sensibility? Does it not express all the sentiments that a sensitive, a lofty, a passionate, mind would like to feel and to inspire? Indeed, my friend, I am so pleased with it that I should like you to have written it; and yet I am sure you would do still better; you would soar to greater heights, and would not have his faults. But give sentence quickly: am I too enthusiastic? At any rate I have not caught it from anyone; I have seen and heard no one. I received the eulogy at nine o'clock; I was dying of impatience to be alone; I have read it, and give you my first

impressions, at the risk of your finding me deficient in common sense.

But, my friend, let nothing give you a distaste for reading to me what you write ; let me be Molière's servant-girl, I will discuss nothing, but feel everything. What good taste and intelligence you show in compressing your subject ! In the most excellent tragedies there are places which are prolix and tedious ; you will have avoided these two faults ; everything will be full of warmth and interest, one's attention will always be held by the subject and the action of the piece ; the author's wit will never appear, and the soul and the genius of M. de Guibert will fill and animate the whole. My friend, why this *vow* not to read me at once, immediately, what I should like to feel and know already ? Will not the *Gracchi* be *you* ? Is not the thing that animates you just what I should like to hear and think of all my life ?

Heavens, how ill you understood me at first, and how well you answer afterwards about Lord Shelburne. Yes, his being leader of the opposition party is exactly the thing which makes me esteem and love him. How could you fail to be in despair at being born under this government, when I, weak and wretched creature as I am, if I had to be born again, would rather be the least important member of the House of Commons than King of Prussia ! Only the glory of Voltaire could console me for not being born an Englishwoman. One more word about Lord Shelburne and I will never speak of him again to you, for :

> The secret of being a bore is that of telling everything.

Do you know how he finds rest for his head and his heart after the turmoil of government ? By doing acts of beneficence worthy of a king : by building public establishments for the education of all who

dwell on his estates; by entering into all the details of their instruction and their well-being. Such, my friend, are the leisure moments of a man who is only thirty-four, and whose mind is as sensitive as it is great and strong. That is the Englishman who would have been worthy to be the friend of the prodigy and miracle of the Spanish nation: that is the man whom I should have liked you to have seen; but you would have regretted him, for assuredly he is not made to live in a country like this. He will leave on the 13th; he wanted to see the reassembly of Parliament; meantime he gives himself up to the amusements of Paris. Never in his life had he known this kind of recreation; he finds it enjoyable and pleasant. "It is a pleasure," he said to me, "because it will not last long, for if one had it always, such a life would become unutterably boring." How far different is that from a Frenchman, from an amiable courtier! President Montesquieu is right: government makes men. In this country, a man endowed with energy, loftiness of mind, genius, is like a lion chained up in a menagerie, and the knowledge of his own strength puts him to torture; he is a Patagonian compelled to walk upon his knees.

My friend,, there is only one career open to glory, but it is a fine one: it is that of the Molières, the Racines, the Voltaires, the d'Alemberts, Condorcets, etc., etc. . . . Yes, my friend, you must confine yourself to that, for so nature has willed it. Good-night; I do not know whether this letter will go, but I have had a talk with you, and am satisfied.

Tuesday morning.

I see that the post to Bordeaux leaves this morning, so I send my letter. If you were to arrive on the 13th, as you said at first, this would be useless. Tell me

wherever you write to me from, whether you went from the 21st October to the 1st November without writing to me. The couriers of Monday and Saturday of last week have left me without any news of you. I cannot tell you into what a state of depression that casts me; my mind is dead, and my body is in a state of suffering which would cause you pity. Good-bye, my friend; if you believe M. Turgot, you will be here on the 13th.

Letter 87

TO M. DE GUIBERT, HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE, RUE DE TARANNE

Sunday, 10.0 *p.m.*, 13 *November*, 1774.

My friend, you hurt me, and the feelings which animate me are a great curse both for you and for me. You were right when you told me that you had no need to be loved as I know how to love; no, that is not your style; you are so perfectly lovable, that you must be or become the prime object of all those charming ladies who place on their heads all that they had within them, and are so lovable that they love themselves in preference to all else. You will be the pleasure, you will satisfy the vanity, of almost every woman. By what fatality could it happen that you have kept me alive, and make me die of anxiety and grief? My friend, I am not complaining, but I am distressed because you set no value on my repose; the thought by turns freezes and tears my heart.

How can one have a moment's peace with a man whose head is as ill-constructed as his carriage, who counts dangers as nothing, who never foresees anything,

is incapable of attention, of punctuality, who never manages to do what he has planned ? In a word, a man who lives in a happy-go-lucky way, whose attention is attracted by anything, and checked and fixed by nothing. Heavens, it was in your wrath, in the excess of your vengeance, that you condemned me to love and adore what ought to be the torture and despair of my heart ! Yes, my friend, what you call your faults may perhaps kill me, and I desire it, but nothing will make me cold. If my will, if reason, if reflection, could have done anything, should I have loved you ? Alas ! At what a time was I pushed, hurled, into this abyss of misery ! I still shudder at it. The means of bringing back a pleasant feeling to my heart would be to think that I shall see you to-morrow ; but then how am I to count on such a happiness ! Perhaps your carriage is damaged ; perhaps some accident has happened to you ; perhaps you are at Chanteloup ; in a word, I fear everything, and nothing consoles me.

My friend, it is not enough to make me anxious, you do more, you accuse me : I ought to have written to you at Chanteloup ? And in your last letter from Bordeaux, you told me that perhaps you would not go to Chanteloup ! Well ! Good Heavens, what is the use of proving you wrong ? Will you mend your ways, and shall I love you less ? Good-night. Every time my door was opened to-day, my heart beat more quickly ; there were moments when I was afraid of hearing your name, and then I was wretched because I had not heard it. All these contradictions and diverse emotions are true and are to be explained by these words : *I love you.*

Letter 88

TO THE SAME

Saturday, 19 *November*, 1774.

Your letter of Thursday morning was harsh and unjust ; the one you wrote an hour before was crushing from the excessive truth and lack of restraint with which you told me you had never loved me, and that henceforth you could not live for anyone, etc., etc. But do you realise that your avowal has turned my remorse into shame ? I have not dared since to think of myself without horror, and I have deliberately turned my thoughts away from you, I wished neither to judge nor to hate you.

Yesterday you came so late, you were so eager to be gone that you really proved to me that you had only yielded to my note, and it seems quite natural to me ; I only mention it in order to tell you that I know well that you will not be disappointed at not seeing me this morning. I am expecting the Archbishop of Aix, and he wants to talk to me ; my doors will be shut. I am going to pay some calls this afternoon, and shall not come in until eight o'clock. To-morrow, I am dining at the comte de Crillon's and I shall be paying calls until eight. I tell you my arrangements, not that I think they may have any influence on yours, but only to save you the trouble of thinking of seeing, or avoiding me. The person who disposes of you and of your time will not let you remain a prey to the disgust you feel for the world and for society ! You will find amusement, peace, pleasure, happiness, with her and in her house, and you will no longer feel the mortal disgust which must attach to the misfortune of deceiving the person one loves best. It was not worth while ! You must feel very guilty towards her ! Do at least

give yourself up this time irrevocably to the invincible preference which leads you on, and do not again offend it by placing the affection you owe her on anything like the same plane as that which others may inspire in you.

But, Heavens, I do not know why I speak to you of what occupies your mind, no doubt it is a result of my habit of liking to please you.

We read yesterday evening a *Eulogy of Reason* which was thought excellent; I should have liked you to hear it: the reading did not finish till about ten o'clock.

Letter 89

TO M. DE GUIBERT, HOTEL DE MALTE, RUE TRAVERSIÈRE

Saturday morning, November, 1774.

My friend, you never know what you want to do, so I am going to tell you: you will go out before eleven, you will pay calls in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and then you will go and dine with Mme de Boufflers, at five you will be at the comte de Crillon's, Rue de Braque; he will be expecting you, and he will not be at home in the morning, from what he told me yesterday; as you came back from the Marais you will leave cards on Mme de Vaines; and then at seven you will come to the Comédie-Francaise to see *Henry IV*, which is only the second piece, you will ask for the duc d'Aumont's box in the orchestra, on the Queen's side; you will tell your lackey to be at the main door in the Cour des Princes at 8.15, and we shall all leave by that exit, without waiting a minute: after this you will sup with Mme de M. . . .

There's your whole day perfectly settled, do not make any change in it.

And then, to-morrow, Sunday, you will work all morning without going out, you will dine with Mme de M . . . ; you will return at 5.0 to work, and at 8.0 you will come to my house. *Pay attention*, and listen to me :

Monday, dinner at M. de Vaines' and supper with Mme de M . . .

Tuesday, dinner at the Contrôle Generale and supper with Mme de M . . .

Wednesday, dinner at Mme Geoffrin's, and supper with Mme de M . . .

Thursday, dinner at the comte de Crillon's, and supper with Mme de M . . .

Friday, dinner at Mme de Chatillon's, and supper with Mme de M . . .

Saturday, dinner with Mme de M . . ., and go to Versailles after dinner, and return on Sunday evening to spend the evening with me. My friend, you will be the most amiable person in the world if you do all that is prescribed for you ; I defy you to make a choice that would please you better ; I have, as was only right, made your pleasure the first consideration.

My friend, you told me you had wanted to cause me pain ; that is impossible ; you are good, you have feelings, and you know . . . What ? that I would give my life, that I would do far more than that, would give myself up to torture, to deliver you from a quarter of a hour's pain. And you wanted to make me suffer ! That is not true.

I have led you into a mistake. M. and Mme de la Borde are in Paris ; you will go this morning, will you not ?

Letter 90

TO THE SAME

Saturday, 11.0 *p.m.* (*the same day*), 1774.

Heavens, how wise you were not to come to the Comedie. I cannot find words to express the boredom it caused me; I was physically so ill at ease as to be almost in pain; in fact it was more than I could manage to spend the evening with Mme de Châtillon, to whom I had promised it.

I feel that there is a degree of misery which deprives one of the power to endure boredom; it is dreadful to me to make myself a passive auditor of trivialities which, often revolting, are almost as stupid as they are vulgar. What a detestable play! How *bourgeois* is the author, how common and limited his intelligence![1] How vulgar is the public, how plebeian! How stupid is good society and how poor its taste! How I pity the wretched authors who may plan to win a reputation by means of the theatre! If you only knew how the beastly public applauded. Molière himself could not aspire to a greater success. There is nothing noble in it but the names and the costumes; the author makes Henry IV and his courtiers talk like *bourgeois* of the Rue Saint-Denys; it is true that his peasants use the same style. In a word, the work is in my opinion a masterpiece of bad taste and platitude, and the society folk who praise it seem to me like valets who speak well of their masters. My friend, if I have you once more against me in your judgment of this comedy, I shall be very sorry, but shall not retract a word, because it is not a question of how far it is good or bad; it is deadly to me, and all four of us in the box were overwhelmed by the same boredom.

[1] *La partie de chasse de Henri IV*, a comedy by Collé. [V-G.]

This is a long story, and you will think I have kept the boring qualities of boredom ; perhaps too I shall not be so cruel as to send you my letter, but while giving you an account of my day, I am consoled for it. I began by poisoning myself at dinner through eating mutton in which there was garlic ; this made my blood course in a way that I might easily call feverish.

Talking of fever, have you any news of your mother ? Is she better ? And is your father's return certain ? That is the only thing which can console me for your leaving the quarter. And what have you done with your day, my friend ? Not a single thing of what you said, have you ? And to-morrow you will not work, and so on every day. An activity which forms a hundred plans, and a facility which makes you give in to the first excuse ; regrets, desires, agitation, and never rest ; my friend, one must love you before one can know you, as I have done, for if one judged you, to bind one's happiness up with you would be to devote oneself to hell.

I am going to tell you all my plans for to-morrow, Sunday, so that you can give me the moments which are least inconvenient to you ; first of all Mass, then a visit to a sick friend till dinner ; I dine with madame de Châtillon ; at 5.0 I shall go to the Hôtel de la Rochefoucauld, and shall not come back till 6.30, after which I shall not go out again. Good-bye, my friend, I love you, but I feel too sad and too stupid to know how to tell you so.

My friend, can I, without offending you, beg you to bring me the abbé de B . . .'s letter one day ? For I take care not to dare to claim pages torn from my letters. I am wrong to have noticed it, and when I mention it I make you *indignant*. The feeling is very just, so I dare not complain of it. Oh! I am too difficult, too exacting, too touchy! I have all the

defects of a wretched creature who loves wholeheartedly and has no more than a single emotion and a single thought. Good-bye, then.

Letter 91

TO THE SAME

11.0 *p.m.*

I HAVE read your note ; it is very kind, very reasonable ; your conversation had been very harsh, even cruel ; it left me prostrate. Never, never, has my mind been so worn out, my body in such pain. You had planned never to see me again ? Well, why change your mind ? You gave me strength to carry out my plan, to satisfy the most urgent need of my heart ; and we should both of us have been relieved, delivered : I, from a burden which is too much for me, you from the sight of the grief which is often tiresome to you, and always weighs on you. No, I will not thank you ; I preferred your first emotion to your reflection. By hurting me, you gave me strength ; and by consoling me, by coming to my help, I have told you so a thousand times, you keep me alive, but do not attach me to it.

It is you, I think, who make me feel in the profoundest and most heart-rending way the immensity of the loss I have sustained ; nothing else would have led me to contrast, to compare, and this involuntary emotion often throws me into despair ; and when I am in that disposition I know not whether my regrets, or my remorse, are most dreadful to me. But what does all that matter to you ? The Opera, amusements, the whirl of society, carry you away, and it is only too reasonable ; I do not complain, I am only distressed.

Still I should like you to come to-morrow before you

go to supper, you might have a talk with M. d'Alembert and the good Condorcet, and possibly M. de Vaines; you have seen that he sent me word that he might come. I have seen M. Turgot this evening; I had not had a quiet conversation alone with him for more than six months. I was prostrate; so I think he will have regretted the time he sacrificed to me. Good-night; I am burning hot, the fever devours me. Oh! it is too slow a death; you hastened me on this morning, why restrain me to-night?

Letter 92

TO THE SAME

Tuesday mid-day, 1774.

You did not tell me so, or write it, and I will prove it to you. The hope of seeing you is enough to stop and alter all my arrangements; so *do* you think that when I was sure of seeing you I should go and make an engagement? But as you depend on the arrangements of madame de M . . ., you can never foresee anything, or say with certainty what you will be doing. My friend, there is no great harm in all this; it only causes some misunderstanding, but you remain free, and that is the important point.

I am cross because you did not have yourself taken to where you knew Mme de M . . . was having supper M. de Saint-Lambert was going to the Place Vendôme. But you never know what you want, or where you are going; anyhow, it does not matter. If you are amused, pleased, and happy at the end of the day, you have done well, you are right, and your way of life is certainly the best; so do not make any change in it. For my part, I am sad, worn out; I should like,

not to change my way of feeling things, but to be annihilated ; I should like to have been so the very day, the very moment, when I ceased to be loved. Heavens, what a loss ! My heart cannot get used to the dreadful word *never* ; it still gives me convulsions. Yesterday, during the reading, I was afraid I should be forced to go out. I remembered that the last time this particular reading was given, *he* was the occasion of it. My heart was broken, I did not hear a single word more, and from that moment I only existed in those cruel and tender memories.

My friend, why have you torn me from death ? It is the only thought which can calm my mind, it is its most lasting need and desire. Good-bye, I do not know how I shall be, but, to my great regret, I shall be forced to restrain myself.

Night-time is the period of my life when I am at my best ; then, I can give myself up wholly to my affections.

You will tell me, if you know, what you expect to do these next few days ; but please do not make any sacrifice for me, I am not worth it, and besides I am still so unhappy. I have kept your man waiting a long time ; I was not alone.

Letter 93

to the same

Sunday, 5 *o'clock*, 1774.

My friend, you were mad this morning, but it was a very lovable madness, for it was after my own heart. I do not know how I could resist you, and I do not know how I forgot to tell you the pressing reason which kept me at home. What astounds me equally is that

I only remembered it when I saw M. de Vaines enter my room at half past three. He had told me he was coming, yesterday evening, he had sent me word, and I could not tell you. My friend, I have vexed you once, and you distress me a hundred times. For instance, if I do not see you this evening, you will be cruel and unjust, and still I shall not complain.

M. Turgot is a little better; I have had news of him three times since I saw you, and I shall hear as often before mid-night; that satisfies me without re-assuring me. Heavens, hate me; I love you, and I feel as sad as death. No, do not come and see me, go to the *Comédie*, go out to supper, go to the ball; everything is full of pleasure and interest, and I bore you, or make you sad. I bring you too near yourself; the anxiety of passion keeps my mind full of you, and it is so monotonous, so stupid, for a man of the world who is carried away by the attractions of an amiable woman who offers him nothing but pleasure and amusement! In fact, my friend, all this proves that you see as justly as you yourself are just in only loving me feebly; that is all I am worth.

I have seen the painter, Lançon; he is as pretty as a picture himself; he has a sort of air of stupidity, of silliness, of self-conceit, which quite damped my enthusiasm for his talents. That man would never understand your soul: he would paint your features, and find the secret of making your face uninteresting to me. And yet how could that be? Have I not in my heart the means to give breath to stone, and make the canvas live? My friend, I do not want to lose anything by this; you have promised me your portrait, so I will have it, I need it.

I have not gone out; I shall see no-one who will tell me about the ball; I shall hear M. Turgot spoken of, not with the same interest that animates me, but with

the interest one has for virtue, and in fears of his successor. To me, for the last two days, he is no longer Comptroller-General, he is just M. Turgot with whom I have been friends for seventeen years, and on this account he worries and disturbs my mind.

My friend, if you had been to the Temple, if you had got out of your visits in the Marais, if you had thought of doing to-day all that was necessary to ensure your freedom on Sunday, how amiable, how reasonable you would be. But no, every action of yours is decided by a whim ; neither reason, nor affection, settles them ; so your whole conduct has no common sense in it ; but such as you are, I love you to desperation and you are only too well aware of it. This is the third time I have written to you.

Letter 94

TO THE SAME

Tuesday, 10.0 *o'clock*, 1774.

My friend, are you, like me, in your bath ? Have you been in pain ? I do not know whether I owe to you or to the improvement in M. Turgot's health, four solid hours of sleep ; I hardly ever have so much, but I am still suffocated. Here is a letter from the comte de Schomberg, and a note from madame d'Anville ; you will have had one.

I expect to go out at 1.0, and shall come in at 4.0, or rather I shall go for a stroll in the Invalides ; or else, which I should prefer to anything, I will wait for you at home ; you will come early, my friend, please. Come and talk to the comte de Broglie before dinner; you can leave him at 4.0. I do not see you, I do not

speak to you ; without exaggeration, I have forgotten the things which I meant to tell you.

Send me word positively : *I will be with you at such and such a time ;* that will settle where I shall go for dinner. I may leave madame de Saint-Chamans before 4.0, I shall prefer it. Good-bye. If only as a change, *I will not tell you that I love you, nor that you intoxicated me yesterday with emotions I should like never to feel again ; tell me again, my dear, that you love me.*[1]

Letter 95

TO THE SAME

10.30, 1774.

I was with three women ; I was coughing as if I should burst ; I could not thank you for giving me news of you. You have done well, my friend, to stay by your fire ; your health, your prosperity, are even more near and dear to me than my own pleasure. I am sure you will have accused me of ill-temper and injustice ; and you are the one who will have been unjust; but I forgive you ; the feeling I have for you is the fountain of all virtues and has the effects of them all : indulgence, kindness, generosity, confidence, unrestraint, sacrifice of every personal interest. Yes, my friend, I am all these things when I think that you love me ; but a doubt turns my mind upside down and makes me crazy, and the cruel thing is that that is my usual state.

My friend, the first rule for writing in dots is to form one's letters properly, and above all to be accurate; *so*, you cannot write in dots. But I will answer you

[1] Only the initial letters of each word are given in the French, but the meaning, as the comte de Villeneuve-Guibert says, is plain.

all the same, that I care little about the future; I only feel the need of being loved to-day; let us cut out of our dictionary the words *never* and *always*. My heart cannot reach as far as that now; I am a hundred years old, and I have under lock and key the remedy for the future. You see I have read your dots.

But do you read these two passages of Seneca; they delighted me. I wanted you to see them, and had them written out. M. de Mora felt just the same, it sustained him for three years against the last agony; but death is even stronger than love. Good-night; I feel sad, life hurts me, but still I love you tenderly and passionately. I left you guessing this morning what I was afraid of: it was of not seeing you. I spend my life in seeing my fears and my forebodings justified. Shall I at least see you to-morrow evening?

Letter 96

to the same

Sunday, 11.0 *o'clock*, *January* 1775.

I am only just this moment alone, and I should have liked to settle down two hours ago to finish that criticism of the Vicomte de la . . .; and besides for the last twelve days I have been torn from the greatest interest of my life. My friend, how stupid is amusement, how devoid of interest is society to a busy mind! How few conversations are worth the trouble of leaving one's house! I have reached the stage of being almost sick of intelligence, and, as you said, what is merely informing bores me.

Oh! I am very unhappy; the thing which I love, the thing which consoles me tortures my mind by

worry and remorse. So I need pain, for I constantly catch myself wanting what does me harm, but my friend, it is only by taking thought that you can understand all this ; so I ought not to say anything about it ; besides I only meant to write to tell you to send back or bring back the volume of Montaigne which you put in your pocket the other day.

I shall come and fetch you before two o'clock, do not have a carriage ready. My friend, the only noble, just and honourable thing is to submit oneself to one's ill-fortune ; I know so many wealthy people who go on foot for their pleasure, and so many old and infirm people who only travel in cabs ! I am very tedious ! My friend, that is the tenderest proof of my interest, for if you only knew what details are to me, what the happiness one can buy for gold is to me ! Heavens, my present position proves, besides, that I have despised fortune ; doubtless it has its advantages ; but how many things are preferable to it ! Goodnight, my friend. What are you doing at the moment ? I defy you to be better off than I am : I am busied with the man I love.

So be ready before two.

Letter 97

TO THE SAME, IN PARIS

Friday, January, 1775.

It is not because I think you may be curious, but still I must tell you that I am going out at 1.0, that I am dining with M. Turgot ; that I am going to *Orpheus* ; after the opera, I go to madame Geoffrin till midnight, and then finish the evening in the Rue des Capucines. Now, do you want me to come and fetch you to go

and dine with M. Turgot ? Do you want me to take you to the Opera ? Or do you want to go there in M. de Angevillier's box, in the front of the dress circle ? If you want to pay a call on madame Geoffrin after *Orpheus*, we will take you there ; if you liked to spend the evening there, she would be delighted. Consider what you want to take or to leave of all this. I am always longing to see you, always very glad to see you, and—(an inconsistency only to be explained by my madness)—I am always cross when I have seen you.

Were you in time to give your hand to Mme de M . . . ? If she could have seen your impatience, she would have been very pleased. It is your talent to please those you love, and particularly those who love you. Good-bye.

At any rate I shall hear whether you went to Versailles. I want to see my *Constable* again.

Letter 98

TO M. DE GUIBERT, HOTEL DE MALTE, RUE TRAVERSIÈRE

Saturday, mid-day, January, 1775.

I was so worn-out, so chilled by your late arrival yesterday evening, that I forgot to give you a copy of that letter of Mme Geoffrin's that you wanted. Nor did I tell you that you would have a note for the friend whose name you do not want to tell me. If you were amiable, and, above all, reasonable, this is how you would arrange your day to-morrow : you would dine at the Temple, you would see Mme de Boufflers there ; and then at 6.0 you would come either to my room at the Opera or to this one ; I would let you know which. I am much tempted not to go and dine at the comte de Crillon's ; he is to have M. Roucher

there, or so he flatters himself. I admire his talent with all my heart, but the use he makes of it bores me: diamonds, gold, the rain-bow—such things do not touch a sensitive chord in my heart. One word from the man I love, his *slumber even*, rouse every thinking and feeling part of me more than all this glittering wealth. My friend, I want to see you to-day; come before supper. To-morrow I will let you know whether I shall expect you at the Opera or at home.

Come now, never again; I shall not lend you any more manuscripts since you let them go all over the place; is nothing safe with you? Indeed, despite all your faults, you are still quite confident, as you told me yesterday, of being much run after, much loved, a thousand times more than you can, or will, return. Good-bye; I am wrong to write to you, for it makes it almost certain that I shall not see you. It does not matter how the King's Treasury is filled, so long as it is not empty. Heavens, what a pity it is that when you are so lovable you deserve love so little! Good-bye again, my friend. I am not dull—but perhaps too true.

I am not going out to-day until 9.0 this evening; I wager you are already on your rounds. There are only three things the value of which you do not know, and which you scatter broadcast: your time, your talent, and your money. In everything else you are a miser.

Letter 99

to the same

Tuesday, 4.0 a.m., January, 1775.

My friend, do you want me to give you my news? I am in pain, I cannot sleep, and I am feverish. I am all on fire, and the activity of my mind is in my head;

in such a condition, what a burden life is to me! How painful it is! My friend, I do not know what fate everlastingly brings back to me my despair at losing M. de Mora; I should like to think about you, and I am led away by the desire, the need, to follow him, or rather by the need to deliver myself from a regret that tears my heart. Heavens, why did you bid me live? Why do you make me still find some moments of pleasure in loving you? Why do you support me? Why do you keep me balanced between life and death? Oh! let me finish dying, or else make my heart so full of you that I no longer feel the dreadful void that M. de Mora has left there. But, my friend, I reproach myself for letting you see all that I suffered; can you pity me? Yes, you will pity me, because you are kind and sensitive; you will pity me, because you know well that I love you, and that I am kept alive by that feeling alone.

My friend, if I do not see you to-day, I shall be very miserable. Physical sufferings are a nuisance only because they enfeeble my mind; they increase my need to see the man I love, and yet it will distress me to put a moment's constraint upon you, and to deprive you of the hope, even, of pleasure; so do not make any special effort, my friend, still less any sacrifice: I will see you when you can, and I shall always want you.

Forgive me if I say that I tremble lest this letter should come into the hands of the first person who may have a fancy to take it from yours. That note yesterday morning! My friend, pity me for having to distrust one whom I love to desperation, and the only man to whom I always surrender completely. Good-bye. The comte de Crillon has written to you, from my house, that he will fetch you this morning, so be ready.

Letter 100

to the same[1]

Wednesday, an hour after midnight.

Three sorts of people have a right to the pity and indulgence of the reasonable, the kind-hearted, the generous : lunatics, the sick, and the unhappy. On all these heads together I beg you to send back to me to-morrow morning by the same messenger who brings you this letter and portfolio, all my letters that you have, whether they were during your journey or before it. I rely on your conscience and your honour not to keep back a single line. You will put them in this portfolio and will seal the key in the same way as you find it.

You are so kind that I do not ask pardon for the moment of trouble it will cause you ; when I tell you that this attention, this mark of kindness, are necessary to my tranquility, you will not seek for pretexts to refuse them. If I had any reason to fear that, I should dare to use a formula which I have never before and should never again use to you : *I demand that you return all my letters at once.* Forgive me words which while they satisfy my will, are hateful to my feelings. Good-night. Do not come to-morrow morning. I see with regret that I should not have a moment to see you ; I shall only be at home two hours all day, from 7.0 till 9.0. So do not make any effort to see me, I shall be more fortunate on Friday.

I am greatly mistaken if the *Gracchi* is not a very fine thing. Reflection adds to my admiration.

[1] Unpublished. [V-G.]

Letter 101

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Thursday morning, January, 1775.

I could easily think your behaviour lacking in esteem, confidence, friendship, in all those feelings of which you have given me evidence, and certainly I should not find in your letter, if I read it again, a single expression which would not confirm me in such an opinion. But I do not want to give in to it. It would be too great an insult to you and to me. I should have to stop loving you; I should have to believe that you are like all other women, and my heart has so long set you on a pedestal above them. Yes, I should have to think you self-centred enough to be afraid of having compromised yourself with me, and to have at present no other longing than to get back the proofs of your affection.

Oh! Was it for you to behave so unworthily, so vulgarly, towards me? Yes, unworthily, and vulgarly —such are the adjectives your behaviour deserves, if you can have imagined that I might abuse your confidence. Indeed, what else could you be afraid of? I have told you that your letters are all kept in a casket. You have seen that those which I had on me were in the case you gave me for the purpose. But let us say no more about it. The thought revolts and paralyses me.

Here are your letters. Here they are, including the one you write to ask for them.

It can matter very little to you now to know when you will see me again. You have everything you wanted of me. It will not be to-day, or to-morrow, or ever again, if the horrible feelings which in spite of myself your behaviour raises up in my heart, are not

effaced. I am really afraid that you have lacerated my heart for the reſt of my life. But you will be at peace ; there will be no trace of the paſt but in my memory, and that was your object.

Letter 102

TO M. DE GUIBERT, HOTEL DE MALTE, RUE TRAVERSIÈRE

Thursday mid-day, January, 1775.

It would indeed be *unworthy* and *vulgar* behaviour to leave you to your anger, and to the belief that I could insult you. My friend, try to know me better and believe that I could not be afraid of being compromised, as you call it, or even of being betrayed ; but think of this : that to one who is not afraid of death, and, far from fearing it, has not passed a day for the laſt six months in which she has not felt within herself the desire and the ſtrength to foreſtall it—think of this, that while I am in such a ſtate of mind, my heart can only know one kind of fear, and that relates to my fondness for you. I am afraid of displeasing you ; I am afraid of diſtressing you. But, honeſtly, for myself I fear nothing, for there are times on the contrary when I could wish that you would reduce me to despair. Consider then, after this, whether I could feel the petty alarms which are only aroused by a dull truthfulness which makes one desire an eſteem that one does not deserve. No, my friend, I repeat it, I fear nothing in the world but my conscience ; and as I cannot calm it, or ſtifle my remorse, I should like to die ; and my sole regret in dying would be to have hurt you. Judge me in the light of this sincere avowal of the feelings which animate me, and see whether your heart ought ſtill to be *lacerated* by an impulse which would no doubt deserve censure were it not an effect

of the two diseases which devour my life and tear my heart in shreds. My friend, I have said it to you over and over again, you absolutely must show me much, very much, indulgence; only at this price can you escape a repentance that would disturb you all your life. So forgive me, not my intention, not my feelings, for assuredly they cannot need pardon, unless it be for the excessive passion which animates them; but forgive me an access of madness which I could not restrain.

Your letter is harsh, unjust, but it has not taken away from me all hope of reaching your heart. Tell me that it is closed to me for ever, and I will thank you: for with those words you will break the sole tie which still binds me to a life full of regrets and remorse, and in which I can promise myself no other interest and no other pleasure than that of loving you, without any hope of your sharing my feelings. But, at least, you can be quite sure that I shall not disturb your happiness, or your amusements; I shall never ask you to give me moments which you think you can employ better, and you will be free to see me only occasionally, without any fear of tiresome reproaches. My friend, tell me again that you will *never* see me again, that is, I think, the word which my soul is most greedy to hear. No, I am afraid only of life; I bid nature do her worst; I feel so strong, and at the same time so weak, that I beg you from the bottom of my heart either to finish my ruin, or to come to my help. Good-bye, my friend.

I do not say come and see me, but only warn you that I shall do none of the things I had planned. I shall come in at 5.0, and if I knew where you will be dining, I should go and fetch you and serve as a *cab*. I am sending to your house, but you will not be there. If you condescend to answer me, I am giving instruction for your reply to be brought to me at Mme de Meulan's, Rue des Capucines, where I am dining.

Letter 103

TO M. DE GUIBERT

Thursday mid-night, 10 *February*, 1775.

Mid-night is ſtriking, my friend; I have juſt been ſtruck by a memory which freezes my blood. It was on the 10th February laſt year that I was intoxicated by a poiſon the effects of which ſtill endure. At this very moment, it changes the circulation of my blood, it draws it with more violence to my heart, it brings with it excruciating regrets. Alas! What fate compels the feelings of the livelieſt and ſweeteſt pleaſure to be bound up with the moſt overwhelming misfortune? How dreadful is their intermingling! Might I not say when I recall that moment of horror and pleaſure: "I saw a young man come to me, his eyes full of intereſt and feeling; his face expreſſed kindness and affection; his ſoul ſeemed to be agitated by paſſion. At his ſight I felt myſelf filled with a kind of terror mingled with pleaſure; I dared to raiſe my eyes, and let them dwell on him; I drew near: my ſenſes and my ſoul were frozen. I saw him paſſed, and as it were ſurrounded, by Grief in mourners' dreſs: ſhe held out her arms, ſhe wiſhed to hold me back, to ſtop me, and I felt myſelf led on by a deadly attraction. 'Who art thou?' I cried, in my agitation 'Thou who cauſeſt ſuch charm and terror, ſuch grief and ſuch alarm to fill my ſoul? What news doſt thou bring? . . .' 'Wretched woman,' he ſaid, with a ſombre air and with the accents of grief, 'I ſhall be, I ſhall make, your deſtiny; he who animated your life has but now been ſmitten by death. . . .'"

Ah! Yes, my friend, your tears uttered theſe deadly words; I did not hear them, and yet they are graven on my heart; it ſtill ſhudders at them, and it loves you.

Please, let me see you to-morrow : I am filled with sadness and distress. Heavens, a year ago at this very hour M. de Mora was struck by the fatal blow ; while I, at the same moment, three hundred leagues away, was more cruel, more guilty, than the ignorant barbarians who killed him ! I die of regret ; my eyes and my heart are full of tears. Good-bye, my friend, I ought not to have loved you.

Letter 104

TO M. DE GUIBERT, HOTEL DE MALTE, RUE TRAVERSIÈRE

11 *o'clock*, 1775.

I HAVE been waiting for two hours ; and here the pamphlet is at last ; so remember that the *Eulogy of Reason* has given you pleasure, do not change your opinion, as you usually do. My friend, you make yourself out to be more malicious than you are. You repeat what you hear people say, for you could never find it in yourself to attack people of the highest worth. They are not philosophers, they are not perfect, they are onesided ! Well, so be it ! But what are the fools who judge them, the slanderers who condemn them ! All said and done, my friend, when you preach moderation you are carried away by your zeal, and in almost every conversation you must reproach yourself with having committed yourself without making any converts ; but as I should not be any luckier than you, I will finish my sermon here, and tell you that I shall be charmed to see you. Come early ; consider that I have not seen you for a week.

Can you guess whether I was delighted by your note ? Heavens, why do you employ so much interest and warmth to overwhelm me, to prove me inconsistent

and ridiculous, and after that why are you as incapable as an icicle of reaching my heart ? Why ? Because you are true ; because if you had not loved me, you would have hated me ; because the only misfortune is that we ever met ; but since it is impossible to blot out the past, I beg you to console me for it by coming early. Good-bye. I write while talking to M. d'Alembert ; it isn't easy.

Letter 105

TO THE SAME

Mid-day, Tuesday, 1775.

Now really, I am quite sure of it, you will adopt no one's manners, or tone ; you are like God, infinitely perfect, and I think you are as contented as He is. Everything that is really great could only lose by change ; possibly Alexander would not have wished not to have a wry neck. So keep everything, my friend ; your pretty obeisances, your awkward manner, and above all your forgetfulness of everything that may touch and interest the one you say you love.

For instance, you show a refinement of delicacy which I have seen in no one but you : you will not see me, because that compels you not to see me alone ! Really, that is a most touching tenderness, especially when you are perfectly free to come to me in the morning or at 4 o'clock : that is the time when one is almost sure to find me alone. But still, my friend, it shows far more delicacy not to come, and I give my consent, for I do not desire you to make sacrifices for me any more than you want to make them for me. Your excessive interest will be content with these two words : I *have suffered*. Good-bye. No, do not imagine that the

district has anything to do with it : *it is the heart that does everything*, in the words of La Fontaine.

So good-bye, till Thursday. I live with my other friends ; as for you, I merely see you : this is as it should be.

Letter 106

to M. de Guibert

Read this at once

12.30 *p.m.*, *Monday*, 20 *February*, 1775.

They are coming to look for me ; I shall not see you, I shall not know whether you want me to come and fetch you. Do you know that they are playing *Tom Jones* with the *False Sorcery* ? It would give you pleasure, and your pleasure is mine. So give your evening to Mme de M . . . and the comedy to me ; but be quick and make up your mind, for your seat has many competitors. You were good enough last week to deprive me of two evenings on which I had counted ; this has stirred my heart to generosity, and I give you your freedom this evening without rancour.

I am still shaken by my evening and my day yesterday ; I need solitude and quiet thought, and with you I should only find agitation. So go and spend your evening with her whom you love, who pleases you and loves you, and let me be engulfed in, intoxicated by, a grief which is worth more than all the pleasures of the people with whom you supped yesterday.

Yes, vice itself is of more worth than these souls of papier-maché, these empty heads ; vice makes one angry, revolts one, while such people seduce you by their air and their manners and for ever extinguish intelligence, soul and talent. Heavens, do not expose

M. Roucher to the disgust of being judged by those still-born, or dead-alive, creatures; they will not understand him, and they will wound his soul by the insolence with which they will talk to him of his poverty. You were indeed right to tell them that with such talent one is richer, greater and happier than anyone there.

I will tell you of a generous action of M. de Beauvau's, which will give you a measure of his heart, or what passes for it. M. Turgot will understand M. Roucher; he will appreciate him; he is virtuous and there will be no need to say anything to make him.

M. de Vaines also had answered me, and I can answer for him to you. Your great-nephews will be looked after, that is quite certain. Give in one of these cards: I am giving orders for it to be brought to me at Saint-Joseph where I am dining: now say that I am not ingenious! I have written up your subject in three different ways; but take care only to give me back one.

Letter 107

to mlle de lespinasse

Monday, 20 *February*, 1775.

My friend, M. Roucher did not rouse greater enthusiasm in you, or intoxicate you more, than he has me. I have had the same emotion as you. I longed passionately to be M. de la Borde, even less than M. de la Borde; for were I only the comte de Crillon, the man would have next day found shelter in my house. But you cannot imagine how utterly enervated and stupid certain society people are. I wanted to make

everyone I met share my enthusiasm ; no, I did not want to, there was no plan about it, I had to.

I wanted to rouse M. de Beauvau, Mme de Boufflers, everyone I saw. M. de Beauvau kept on asking me whether M. Roucher had taſte : you poor creature, said I to myself, it is indeed a queſtion of taſte, when I am talking of a man of genius, an exceptional man, a man who has all the warmth of the sun and of passion in his heart ! And then Mme de Luxembourg came up : " Ah ! let us hear this man. Mme de Boufflers, let us have the man brought ". And then to me : " What sort of a man is he ? What is his name ? "—" M. Roucher."—" M. Roucher : I never heard of it ; how old is he ? What does he look like ? Does he take money ? "—" Really, Madam, I have no idea ; I did not see him, I heard him ; it seemed to me that with a talent like his one is richer and greater than anyone here."

Yes, certainly, the man has loved. The Zima of whom he sings in his poems is the one who inspired him. Someone said to him : " You have surely been in love ? "—" *I am ſtill*," he replied. But do you know what effect the reading had on me ? It moved me to such an extent, it tired me out so completely with pleasure and admiration, that I could do nothing else that evening. I left at mid-night with the chevalier de Chaſtellux, and very soon went to bed. And you, my friend, turned a pleasure into a poison. You ſtraightway bore it to the shadow which pursues you ; you imparted it to him : you wrote to him. Oh ! my friend, your soul is even superior to M. Roucher's. But how small am I beside you two !

M. de Vaines has answered me. He asks me, from M. Turgot, for a thing which I refuse, and which it aſtounds me that M. Turgot should ask : that I should read the *Conſtable* at his house, on Saturday after

dinner, for the Arch-Duke. It looks as if your M. Turgot were a man of intelligence who had none, or at any rate had very little understanding of the proprieties.

I shall try to see you for a moment this morning before I go to M. d'Argental's ; I will tell you whether I am going to the *Comédie Italienne*. If I do not go, I shall spend my evening with you ; I should prefer the latter pleasure. I shall make all my arrangements give way to it. Good-bye. I have a copyist with me ; I am dressing, I am doing three or four things at once. But I love you, and love you with all my heart ; that is the foundation and the constant habit of my thoughts. Good-bye.

Letter 108

to M. de Guibert

Saturday, 10.30, 1775.

Yes, I hoped to see you and waited for you, all day ; it was my heart's desire ; but a deeper feeling told me that I should not see you. If I always listened to it, my soul would go out, or my life soon end. I know you so well, I feel myself so blameworthy, that you will never hear a complaint or reproach. I think you do well to go to Versailles ; the business must be spoken of once, to be finished with it.

M. Geoffrin has brought me an engraving for you ; I am sending it so that you may enjoy it the sooner. The woman is beautiful but as cold as a Muse. So send your copy to Mme Geoffrin, she is in a hurry. When one is very young or very old, one wants one's pleasures quickly. I have been in much pain to-day ; it is my usual way of life ; one ought not to grudge

ills which are always there, it is quite enough if one is put up with. Good-night. When you come back, perhaps you ought to go to M. Turgot's.

Letter 109

TO THE SAME

7 o'clock, Monday, 1775.

Yesterday at this time, my friend, I was expecting you and was suffering, and to-day my soul is despondent and sad because it is not sustained by the hope of seeing you What I feel recalls to me M. de la Harpe's lines :

> Why can I not once more be waiting,
> E'en were he once more not to come !

My friend, how I pity you for not being able to share the emotion which animates me ! You would once more know happiness, the kind of happiness that gives one the idea of Heaven, and would give one the strength to purchase it even at the cost of the tortures of hell.

Yes, I feel sure, my soul is made only for extremes : to love feebly is impossible for me ; but on the other hand, if you do not reciprocate my love, if my soul cannot carry yours with it, if you want to live shared, if you find it enough to be disturbed and never happy, I feel I have enough elasticity in me to give you up entirely, and leave you completely to what has satisfied you hitherto.

My friend, you know quite well, whenever one feels the strength, even the desire, to die, one can claim anything, demand anything ; one does not give oneself time to deserve, to win by lapse of time and by slow

degrees what one needs to have at once. To be loved by you is the price I set not on my happiness, but on my life ; when things are so, it would be shameful to deceive me, and generous to leave me no hope. But this is not in the least what I meant to say to you when I sat down at my writing-table ; see how free one is, when one's mind is distressed ! I wanted you to be warned not to come to-morrow before mid-day, because I have remembered that I have a hair-dresser coming, and it is hateful to see you at so tiresome a time. I shall be rid of him at 12.30 at latest.

Be annoyed at it, if you like, but I could not tell you how lucky I found it that you went away this morning ; ten minutes later, I do not know what would have become of me. M. de Magallon came, and a short time after his departure, I felt really ill : I had a violent attack of convulsions ; my mechanism can no longer stand up against the emotions of my mind. I am not frightened by it, nor disturbed, I fear neither pain, nor the final end of pain ; but, my friend, can you explain what gives such strength in the depth of misfortune ? Can it be that desperate situations fortify and elevate the mind ? If so, one ought to put up with one's fate and not complain.

A conversation is going on in my room which I find tiresome, though I am not tempted to take any part in it. Good-bye, my friend ; you felt no need to see me again this evening, while I have not been able to leave you the whole day, and however you may have been amusing yourself, whatever pleasure you may have had, I envy you nothing ; I have been in better company. I have been deep in *Catinat* ; I have read part of it again, and am more charmed, more delighted, than I can say. Assuredly, *the author will go far :* it is not enough to say that he possesses talent, soul, wit, genius : he has a thing which almost everything good

lacks, the eloquence and warmth which make one feel him before one judges him. That is why I can without any presumption praise and approve with as much truth as if I had intelligence and taste. I cannot discuss or weigh up anything; but a beautiful thing carries my soul away, and then I am right, whatever you may say.

Good-bye, good-bye.

Letter 110

to the same

Wednesday evening, 1775.

My friend, here is your muff-box: the person who gives you it does not flatter herself that it can be as dear to you as *Sophy's* was to *Tom Jones*. Are you in retirement? Will you admit me to it to-morrow? Let me know at least on what to employ my thoughts and my feelings: is it to be on regrets or in expectation? Whichever it is, both will be full of you, and whether you deprive me of pleasure, or let me enjoy it, I shall love you tenderly.

You have not told me whether you have been to *Gustave*? So far as I remember, it is very bad, and written in a barbarous style. Good-night. Guess for whom I leave you? I would leave the present, the future, the whole world, for you; only I cling to my memories more than to life itself, more than to death too, for they help me to wait for it.

Look for two of my letters which you took care to *put away on your table*. Please, please, finish the translation of this chapter. I will give you my translation: there's an encouragement for you.

Lettr iii

to the same[1]

Thursday mid-day.

How stupid it is! How unworthy! Well, good Heavens, reassure yourself: the proof that it was not expensive is that I am the giver. My friend, everything you say about it is very, very common-place: "It is too big; you will lose it, you want to pay for it! . . ." Fie now! Be quiet! Die of shame, if you like, and so that you may not die of cold when you go out to dinner, I hasten to send it back to you; take care not to *send it back again*, do not let us admit my lackey to the jest, or to our dispute.

My friend, when you do not say to me, "*I hope to see you*", I try to have no need of hope, and tell myself: I shall not see him. You have more to do than Providence; for you watch over the happiness of two people: first of all madame de M . . . must be pleased; and then I come, but a long way after, as is only right, and I ought to say with the woman of Canaan: *I will be content with the scraps which fall from my master's table.*

But, my friend, this Gospel morality and accent are so base that only a dull Christian could be content with them; I do not aspire to Heaven, and I have no wish to feed in this life on the scraps which fall from anyone's table.

Good-bye. If I see you, I shall be charmed; if you do not come, I shall say to myself: he is better off than if he were with me, and doubtless this *pleasant* thought will calm me.

[1] Unpublished. [V-G.]

Letter 112

TO THE SAME

Saturday, 10.0 *p.m.*, 1775.

My friend, how good, how kind you are to have deigned to make up to me for what I loſt this morning! If you knew too how I had waited for you, how I had taken care to keep away and get rid of everything that might diſturb my pleasure! What hopes each carriage that passed raised in me, and then what pain it gave my heart! Heavens, how I love you! How blameworthy I feel for having been capable of wounding you! No, my friend, do not forgive me, punish me, add, if it is possible, to my grief, to my regrets; extreme misery muſt drive one beyond all bounds. Yes, it makes one mad, delirious, ill; all this was needed before I could be capable of offending you. For three days I had felt no misery but this, and I should have died of it if you had not come to my help. Oh! my friend, you uttered words which ſtill make me shudder, which rend my heart; I chill you, you had to *fight againſt yourself to make yourself see me.*

Oh Heavens! Why was I not annihilated before hearing words which would give me courage to face the cruelleſt of deaths! Do not tell me again that I am condemned to hate you one day. My friend, I appeal againſt this sentence, and I swear by you whom I love, by all that I hold sacred, not to survive that horrible emotion by a single hour. *I* hate you! But see what passion and tenderness fill my heart! If one day it was necessary not to love you any more, Heavens, how sweet would death be! Heaven is my witness that I cleave only to you, and that all the care, all the kindness, all the friendship, all the interest

which are so lavishly showered on me, would not have the power to keep me alive till to-morrow.

My friend, M. de Mora is always at my side, and I see you always ; if my soul lost sight of this support, this help, I should not live an hour. So read to the bottom of my heart, and look into it even more deeply and clearly than I can tell you. Can one ever express what one feels, the thing that gives one life and breath, that is more necessary to one, yes, more necessary, than air, for I have no need to live, and I do need to love you.

Heavens, my friend, how far off are you ? You told me yesterday : "*you began by wounding me, you have ended by chilling my heart*". And I give you this answer : you have wounded me, humiliated me, repulsed me, and I add : you might despise me, hate me, and still I should find it in me to love you passionately. Yes, my friend, I repeat it ; death comes into my thoughts twenty times a day, and my soul dare not conceive the idea of loving you less.

Know me utterly and completely ; see in my heart a poison which consumes me, and which I dare not show you. It is not my remorse : I sometimes speak to you of it. It is not my pain, I have often complained of it to you : my friend, it is an evil which changes the whole course of my reason and my health ; an evil which makes me unjust, suspicious, which has made me utter things which I loathe ; how can I have been so beside myself as to be capable of telling you that I had a bad opinion of you ? Is such a thing natural ? Can it exist in my heart ? Does one adore, does one worship, a thing which one does not think a God ?

My friend, my head and my soul must have been over-excited to an extent most unusual, most extreme, for me to be as guilty as I was. Heavens, I was loved as I love you, and by the most perfect of creatures ;

and will you after that have the courage to say that I have not loved you ? that my feeling was hatred ? Yes, indeed, I felt hatred, but hatred of myself, of the irresistible emotion which swept me away. My friend, look into it closely and you will see that although no doubt you have been much loved, never has anyone loved you with more strength, more tenderness, more passion. My friend, I beg you to keep this letter, and whatever its fate may be I shall not be anxious about it or ever complain. My fate has been sealed by you, since the 10th of February last year : *I must love you, or die.*

Letter 113

TO THE SAME

Saturday mid-night.

Well! Did I not tell you so, my friend ? I shall not see you, and I have not. Heavens, how sad it is to foresee things so accurately, and to show one's regrets to one who does not share them. I do not know how I could feel so vividly that you were missing : only at *Iphigenia* could there be more people than there were in my room after dinner to-day. Both large and small boxes were packed ; as a result, I am worn out by fatigue. I had begun by first going to spend an hour with M. Turgot, and then another hour with Mme de Châtillon ; that makes a great many stairs to climb and I was dead when I got in. I had promised to go and spend the evening at Saint-Joseph. I had not strength to do it : I shall go to-morrow, if I have sufficient courage after my walk in the Marais. After dinner I am going to the Rue de Cléry to see some wax-works which, so they say, are astounding. When I went about in the world, I should not have had the

curiosity : two or three suppers give one quite enough of wax-works : but those in the Rue de Cléry are worth more, they act and do not talk.

Come to the show on your way to the Marais and I will tell you then whether I have the Duc d'Aumont's box. I am to have it to-morrow or Tuesday ; I should prefer to-norrow, for we shall have M. Roucher on Tuesday. Anyway, my friend, I must see you *somehow or other* to-morrow, and see a lot of you, either at the Opera or at my house ; you are having supper just by my door.

By the way, Mme de Châtillon does not think you guilty of neglect ; she asked me to-day whether your retreat was still continuing. You can imagine that I did not fail to say that it had been absolute, and this of course made things worse, for women only want to be preferred. Hardly anyone needs love, which is very lucky, for in Paris it is done worse than anything else. They dare to say that they are in love, and yet they are calm and run after amusements ; that shows a good understanding indeed of affection and passion. Poor creatures ! They must be praised like the *Lilliputians* : they are very pretty, very charming, very amiable ; all on a par with the geese who pluck ostriches. Good-bye, my friend ! The confidence you showed me yesterday evening over your mother's letter, is really delightful.

Letter 114

to the same

Tuesday, 6.0 *a.m.*, 1775.

Do you remember your last words ? Do you remember where you put me, and where you imagine you left me ? Well, I must tell you that I quickly came to

myself, and *picked myself up again*, and I could not see that I stood an inch lower than an hour before, when I was on my feet and at my full height ; and, a thing that will perhaps astonish you, of all the emotion which have swept me towards you, the last is the only one for which I feel no remorse. And do you know why ? Because there is an excess of passion which justifies a soul to which all that is vile and dishonourable is equally loathsome. In this surrender of myself, in this lowest degree of abnegation both of myself and of every personal interest, I proved to you that there was only one misfortune in nature which did not seem endurable to me : to offend and lose you : that fear would have made me sacrifice my life. And how could I regret that I proved and uttered forcibly an emotion which for the last year has made me live and die ? No, my friend, in spite of the expressions you used, I do not feel humiliated, and because I think you are honourable, I do not think myself guilty. Do not imagine that I am cheating my conscience, trying to justify myself ; no, my friend, the emotion by which I am animated disdains pride and bad faith, and if you accuse me, I reckon myself condemned for ever. Your opinion, your esteem, touch me as nearly as *my own*, and are dearer to me.

I am so sure of your honesty, I know your goodness so well, that I am sure that before you went to sleep, you promised yourself to see me to-day. I thank you for your impulse, but I ask you not to see me ; show your delicacy and pity. I need to let my heart rest a while ; you make it experience extremes which it had never felt before, and which I could not have reached even in my thoughts.

Heavens, how formidable is great misery ! It has no bound, no measure. I need rest, let me calm down : I am going to take two grains of opium : while I benumb

my blood, my ideas will be confused, my mind will sink into a torpor, and perhaps I shall forget that, although you gave in to me yesterday, you did not answer my heart's need, you did not say a word that could console or re-assure me. Alas! You did not refuse yourself that kindness. Good-bye, my friend, do not come, and, I beg you, do not take umbrage at my door being closed; it will be closed to everyone. I am so weak that the effects of the opium take up all my faculties; but it does give me a respite from my woes, it deprives me of that part of my being which makes me feel and suffer.

Good-bye; I cut myself off from you for twenty-four hours. If by a misfortune which I do not wish to foresee, yesterday evening had . . . No, I dare not finish. My friend, I can half see a means of reparation; I would punish myself; I know how to endure pain, and I should condemn myself never to say to you words which I utter now tenderly and passionately: *I love you*. In the course of your visits remember M. de la Borde. Before giving back that English *book*, I beg you to translate the extract which you read to me.

Letter 115

to the same

Wednesday, 11 *o'clock*.

Judge of my misery: I feel a mortal repugnance to opening your letter; if I had not been afraid of offending you, I was going to send it back to you. Something told me that it would aggravate my woes, and I wanted to take care of myself. The constant pain of my body makes my mind stupid. I have been

feverish again, I have not closed my eyes, I cannot ſtand any more. Please, for pity's sake, cease to torment a life which is on the point of extinction and every moment of which is devoted to grief and to regret.

I do not accuse you, I exact nothing, you owe me nothing; for indeed not an emotion, not a feeling I have had has been with my consent, and when I have been unfortunate enough to give in to it I have always hated the ſtrength or weakness which carried me away. You see you owe me no gratitude, and I have not the right to reproach you at all.

So be free, return to the one you love, who suits you better than you perhaps think; leave me to my grief, let me dwell undiſtracted on the only object of my adoration, whose memory is dearer to me than anything that is left in the natural world. Heavens, I ought not to be weeping for him, I ought to have followed him. It is you who make me live and are the torment of a creature who is devoured by grief and uses all the ſtrength left to her in invocations to death.

Oh! You do too much for me, and not enough! I told you clearly a week ago, you make me difficult, exacting; when one gives everything, one wants to receive something. But once more, I forgive you, I do not hate you. It is not from generosity that I forgive you, not from kindness that I do not hate you; it is because my mind is tired, it is dying of weariness. My friend, leave me, do not tell me again that you love me: the balm turns into poison, you now calm me, now tear open my wound. How you hurt me, how heavily life weighs on me, how I love you none the less, and how wretched I should be if I brought sadness to your heart! My friend, it is too divided, too spent on too many objects, for true pleasure ever to reach it. So you want me to see you this evening?

Well, come then. Good Condorcet has ſtayed with me; I was dead. I kept your messenger, because Ténon interrupted me. He found me ſtill feverish.

Good-bye. It is mid-day. and you will have gone out; and then you will scold me if I am afraid of the effects of your neglect, or worse than neglect.

But think of the Isle of Ré.

Letter 116

TO THE COMTE DE GUIBERT

Thursday, 11 *o'clock.*

Be honourable enough to ſtop persecuting me. I have only one wish, one need—never again to see you alone. I can do nothing for your happiness, I know nothing than can console you, so leave me and do not any longer torment my life by your indifference. I do not reproach you; you are suffering, I pity you, and I will not speak to you again of my woes; but in the name of that which ſtill has some power over your soul, in the name of honour, in the name of virtue, leave me, do not count on me any more. If can calm myself I shall live, but if you go on you will soon have to reproach yourself with having given me the strength of despair. Spare me the vexation and embarrassment of having to shut my doors to you at the hours when I am alone. I ask you, for the laſt time, only to come to my house between 5.0 and 9.0. If Mme de M . . . could read my heart, I assure you she, would not hate me; I should at moſt have brought some regrets to hers; while you two have made me experience the torments of the damned, repentance, hate, jealousy, remorse, self-contempt and sometimes contempt for you; in short, what shall I say? All the

misery of passion, and never a thing that can give happiness to a straightforward and sensitive mind. That is what I owe you, but I forgive you. If I clung to life, I feel that I should not be so generous, I should vow eternal hatred towards you ; but soon I shall cling to you no more than I do to life, and I want to use my sensibility, my heart, and all the life that is left in me, in adoring the only creature who has filled my heart, and to whom I have owed more happiness and pleasure than almost everyone I have seen on earth has felt or could imagine. And it is you who made me guilty towards this man ! My soul rises at the thought ; I turn from it. I should like to become calm ; if I cannot do that, then to die.

I repeat again, it is the last cry of my heart towards you : for pity's sake leave me ; if not, you will know remorse.

Letter 115

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE, RUE SAINT-DOMINIQUE, PARIS

February, 1775.

I MUST come to meet you, my friend, for you are determined to await me. What is the state of your mind to-day ? Does it take back what it granted me yesterday ? Does it repent ? Is it tormenting itself ? I swear to you that this is the last time it shall feel such remorse. *Remorse !* Heavens, can you always regard love as a crime ? Can you never let yourself go more than half, and can you spend your life in self-torture ? No, I do not want again what you will not share. Either you force yourself to make an effort, and suffer for it ; or else you feel nothing ; the former idea distresses me, the latter I find insulting.

I shall never know the passionate impulse which escaped me yesterday evening. I have tried vainly to guess what it was. Why are you afraid of confessing it to me ? Do you not know that love is like fire, it purifies everything. There can be no disgrace but where love is not. I shall see you this afternoon ; I am, however, dining at the Marais, and I shall have to go and dress after that. Anyway, be sure of my wish : it is always to draw near you.

The comte de Crillon sends me word that he has determined to take one of the comte de Broglie's houses. I am therefore writing to the latter's agent, so that he may be as accommodating as possible.

Good-bye. One word : I am giving instructions for my man to wait until you are awake. Your answer will be brought to me at the artist's. It will give me pleasure, will rouse me ; I am dead when I am there. Good-bye again, my friend.

Letter 118

to the comte de guibert

Tuesday, 11 *o'clock*, 28 *February*, 1775.

When one cherishes goodness, and above all when one is in love, one must be neither difficult, nor unjust. So, my friend, I will not accuse you, I will not complain. No, you were not wrong, and the state of despair which you left me in yesterday was involuntary ; you will have reproached yourself because of it ; perhaps you will have been kind enough to say : she is suffering, and I am the cause of her illness. My friend, if your heart has thought such words, you are too well punished and I too well avenged. But shall I not be luckier

to-morrow ? Shall I not dine with you ? Shall I not see you ?

I expect to go and see M. Turgot on Thursday ; I am suggesting to M. de Vaines that he should take me to Versailles, and you too, if that is convenient to you. If this arrangement falls through, the Palatine envoy has offered to take me, and if you can do so, and are willing, I will say as was said in *Democritus* :

We will go to the Court, you are of the party.

The good Condorcet and the excellent d'Alembert are going there to-morrow ; the latter will read some *Eulogies* to him (M. Turgot). M. Roucher has recited his poem to him to-day : that makes two good days : he will have spoken little, and had some pleasure. My friend, if you do not think me as puffed up with pride as the frog, I would tell you that M. Turgot has had me asked to take him my precious rhapsodies, and I am having him told to-morrow that he could not be allowed to miss that good fortune.

Heavens, if only I had seen you, I should have spent a very pleasant day, yes, as peaceful as *Gessner* ; I have had news of M. Turgot every hour ; the comte de Schomberg alone has written to me three times, and each time to reassure me, but still telling me the truth. I dined alone with a lady who is unhappy, and so it was interesting ; and then at 3.0 I took a turn in the Tuileries. How lovely they were ! How divine the weather ! The air soothed me as I breathed it ; I loved, regretted, desired ; but all these emotions were stamped with sweetness and melancholy.

Oh ! my friend, this way of feeling has more charm than the ardour and shocks of passion ; yes, I think I am weary of them ; I no longer want to love *strongly*, I will love quietly, but never feebly, and you can well believe it, since it is you whom I love. I came in

at 4.30, I was alone until 6.0 ; and do you know how I killed the time of waiting ? I read over again your letters since the 1st January, and put them in order ; in short, though I did not see you, my thoughts were eagerly, tenderly, busied with you. And then arrived six or seven people who had consecrated their Shrove Tuesday to me ; they were tired of amusing themselves, they wanted to have the pleasures of conversation, of freedom, of rest, and we enjoyed them all ; for I was still sustained by the hope of seeing you ; I hoped to see you at any rate after the *Barber*. Oh ! When I heard nine strike, I turned cold as death, and my silence gave a hint to everyone to leave me at half-past. But I was mad, or rather merely imbecile, to weary you with a day in which you did not want to take a moment's part. Good-bye, my friend, let me know what you want, what you can manage, about Thursday.

I think you are too much a man of the world to miss to-night's ball. For myself, I prefer to breathe the sweet, pure air of the Tuileries at an hour when one is almost alone there. Oh ! that is because my heart gives me more to think about than all your wit and all your talent can give you. But now, good-bye.

To-morrow morning I have a Mass and madame de Châtillon.

Letter 119

to mlle de lespinasse

My friend, I was going to write to you ; you do not forestall me, but meet me. I spent a painful day yesterday in my carriage. I paid some calls : not all that I promised myself; I shall finish to-day. You are

about to say that I shall not work; pardon me, I worked yesterday evening, for I came in at 9.0. The chevalier d'Aguesseau was waiting for me; we chatted until 11.0, then he left, and I did a good hour's work. This morning I got up before seven, and worked again.

I hope to send in a first memoir to M. Turgot on Tuesday. But it will be no use. The most unlucky passion one can have in this country, is the desire for the excellent. One must add the desire for what is good in every kind, for very few works satisfy me. Like you, I found the comedy stupid and boring; it is food for gossips and slaves.

Oh, my friend, what a difference between it and a letter of Brutus to Cicero, which Mme de Boufflers and I read together yesterday! There is something really good, really great? It is Corneille, it is what I should like to be.

I have had no news of my family; I am anxious. I shall arrange my day so as to come and see you this evening, even spend the evening with you. Only one thing may be a hindrance: madame d'Arcambal is having supper at her house and not dinner, for she had reproached me with not having yet seen her, at any rate at supper Anyway, I shall certainly see you, and all day to-morrow, my friend; I shall not engage a carriage, you shall take me and bring me back. You shall have the abbé de B . . .'s letter. You shall have everything of yours that I still have. You ask, in saying that you are not asking.

I love you; I think I am no longer cross.

Letter 120

TO THE COMTE DE GUIBERT

11.0 *p.m.*, *Tuesday*, 1775.

My friend, the evil has a deeper source; remember these words: *It is not madame de M . . . that* you have to fear, *but . . .*, and the tone in which you uttered them, and the silence that followed, your reticence, your reluctance! Heavens, does it need as much as that to bring anxiety and grief to a mind as disturbed as mine? Add to this your desire to leave me; and for whose sake were you in such a hurry? Could I calm myself? I loved you, I suffered, and I accused myself. I was at your door this morning, sadness filled my heart; I saw you, and the melancholy which pervaded me was mingled with pleasure.

And then I perceived that you tried your hardest to prove I was wrong; and then I believed all that you supposed; I had heard your name mentioned. Then what you were saying to me seemed hateful to me, and it was your fault that I thought it so; I thought I was being a nuisance to you, keeping you from what you wanted to do, putting constraint on you, and my mind was in torment because of it. Well, my friend, I ask your pardon for having suspected you once unjustly; it is the suspicion which is inseparable from misery. Oh! how often could I have complained! How often have I concealed my tears from you! I know it only too well, it is impossible in any way to keep or to win back a heart which is carried away by another inclination; I never cease telling myself so, and sometimes I think I am cured; you appear, and everything is destroyed. Reflection, my good resolutions, misery, all lose their power at

the first word you utter. I can see no refuge but in death, and never has any wretch invoked it with more ardour.

Heavens, you would make me love M. de Marmontel dearly, not because he praised me, but because he told you that I love you. Oh! my friend, my misfortune is that you do not need to be loved as I know how to love. I keep back half my heart; its warmth, its emotion, would be tiresome to you and completely quench yours. A fire which does not warm one is a nuisance. If you only knew, if you could only read how fully I made a strong and passionate mind delight in the pleasure of being loved! He compared those who had loved him, those who still love him, with me, and never ceased to say: "They are not worthy to be your pupils; your heart has been warmed by the sun of Lima, while my countrywomen seem born amid the icebergs of Lapland!" And it was from Madrid that he sent me this message, my friend; he was not flattering me, he was revelling in my love: and I do not think I am praising myself when I tell you that when I love you to desperation, I only give you what I cannot check or keep in.

I have just been interrupted by a letter from M. de Vaines. He makes me anxious; he tells me that it is essential that M. d'Alembert should be at his house before eight, and take him his eulogy of the abbé de Saint Pierre. He adds: *this is important.* I am dying of fear lest they are about to disturb my friend's tranquillity. I should be heart-broken, I should want to add to my own woes all that he is to endure.

Hatred and the bigots are always on the watch; I am more impatient than I can say to see to-morrow here, and I feel that I shall not close an eye. The more I give up my own happiness, the dearer to me is

the happiness of my friends. I cannot express my affection for the good Condorcet and M. d'Alembert better than by saying that they are a part of myself; they are as necessary to me as the air I breathe; they do not distress my mind, but they satisfy it. In short, I should like it to be to-morrow morning.

But, Heavens, if this desire, this need had any other source, if it was not friendship which . . . . Oh! I should be an unworthy creature, and I should detest passion. No, no, I cannot detest it; it has once more distracted me this evening from my sufferings: I have heard again the *Month of September*.[1] How beautiful it is! How lofty! How sublime! But, my friend, your absence spoiled my pleasure, your presence makes it more lively, stronger, deeper. At every time, whatever its state, my heart needs you.

I did not come in until 7.30; I found my friends waiting for me; M. Roucher was there, he did not go to Versailles. I should like it to be to-morrow morning, but it will only give me a very brief time with you. However, I shall be alone to-morrow, for madame de Châtillon is keeping to her room; she wanted me to spend the evening with her. Oh! Heavens! my evenings belong to M. de Mora or to you; it is the part of the day which is dearest to me. If I had not been afraid of a mistake, I should have given this letter to M. de Vaines' lackey. Good-night.

The Gods then loved me well, since you have loved me.
I saw nothing lovable after loving you.

Which would you rather have done?

[1] From Roucher's *Poème des Mois*. [V-G.]

Letter 121

to the same

Tuesday, 11.0 *p.m.*

My friend, you do not need to see me; possibly your thoughts have even found me tiresome; you have thrust from you a memory which came to disturb your pleasure. Oh! how I pity you for not giving yourself up entirely either to what gives you pleasure or to the person who loves you! The division takes away the charm and pleasure which belong to affection, and it must be distressing to an honest mind. I do not accuse you, I do not complain, but I am grieved by my weakness. No, my pride cannot give me strength against you; I love you: all personal interests are silenced by these words; but it is you and your happiness that inspire me with courage and generosity.

Yes, my friend, I can give you up to the person you love; but through this sacrifice, I must obtain your promise not any more to try to fan an emotion in my heart which would only cause it to despair, and above all not any more to beg for marks of tenderness which humiliate me, which blight my heart by leaving it regret and remorse. My friend, I know you are not free to love me, but is it impossible for you to be honest, is that asking too much? Give your own soul rest, do not spend your life in reproaching yourself for what you are doing; stop disturbing the one you love, and do not again offend the one who loves you, and has first claim upon your taste, your desires, your will, in a word makes you your own sacrifice to yourself. I am not giving you back to Mme de M . . . but to yourself, to your own virtue, for I am sure that it makes you suffer, and that you will never be happy until you stop struggling against it.

Heavens, how could I think that it would not cost you much to deceive me ? If you have not strength enough to make me happy, at least it is certain that you are honourable enough to be distressed at making me miserable. My friend, believe a heart which is wholly yours, and that only breathes for you ; struggle no longer, let yourself follow your inclination ; at least the consoling thought that I have done something for your happiness will be left to me, and in the strained situation in which you place me, I have to reproach myself with disturbing it.

Deliver me both from the harm I do you, and from that which you do me. My friend, be honest, I beg you ; what must I do to deserve the truth ? Tell me ; nothing will be impossible for me ; listen to the cry of your heart, and you will cease torturing mine. Yes, I can do without being loved, and it is dreadful to me to doubt you, to suspect you ; think well enough of me not to deceive me. I swear, by what is dearest to me, by you, never to make you repent of having told me the truth. I shall love you for the distress, the shame, you will have spared me ; you shall never hear a reproach. When I yield to you, I shall keep nothing back, not even the right to complain, or rouse your interest.

My friend, think it well over, you would be tactless, very dishonourable, if you missed this occasion of giving yourself up to the need, the inclination, of your heart ; think that from this moment, it is no longer permissible for you to leave me in error. I take from you every pretext for deceiving me, and if you abused my confidence, you would be too blameworthy. Do not compel me to know a horrible emotion that I dare not name when I think of you.

My friend, I know you were delighted with the

Opera ; madame d'Héricourt, the comte de Creutz and the comte de Crillon came to tell me about it. I did not listen to them, because it was you I should have liked to listen to. Besides, the abbé de Boismont has just worried me in talking of you ; he declares that he has been told that I am mad about you ; those are his words ; and he added : " No, I am not malicious, it is neither a snare, nor a revenge." I was confounded, and luckily at that very moment the Archbishop of Toulouse was announced. What do you think of that ? I do not know whether I am trying to re-assure myself, but I think it is a plot of the abbé de Boismont's and one I have given occasion for, I will tell you how.

My friend, I forestall your desires ; I shall give away your place on Thursday, you will go into the hall, you will be useful to madame de M . . . to find her place, you will be near her, and I prefer it. I have seen M. Turgot who told me that he reproached himself for not having answered you : he was much flattered by your letter. He has a charming one from Voltaire, who said to him : *you will be overwhelmed by genuine compliments*, etc., etc. . . . I have had madame de Luxembourg asked on what day madame de Boufflers is coming back ; it is Monday.

I dare not flatter myself that I shall dine with you to-morrow, but I cannot prevent myself from desiring it, though it may perhaps be a wish directed against your pleasure.

If you have been to the comte de Broglie's, my friend, it was very wrong of you not to have given me a moment, you are the reason that I listened only inattentively to the archbishop of Aix ; I was expecting you, how could I pay attention to him ? Good-night.

I feel that the abbé de Boismont is right, but he is wrong to tell me so. I have seen twenty people to-day,

and they could not distract me from my need of seeing you. What have you done ? Where did you sup ? Have you remembered that I loved you ? Could I at least say to you with *Orestes* :

> The heart is for Pyrrhus, the vows for Orestes.

But good-bye. I want nothing but the truth ; so consider once more that you owe it to me unreservedly, without any modification, just as it is in your heart.

Letter 122

Thursday, 11 *o'clock*, 1775.

I did not expect it.[1] I kept in the depths of my heart the painful impression of those cruel words : *We cannot love each other*, and with all the strength left in me I replied : *I cannot live.* My friend, it is impossible to express all my suffering, all my emotion ; it seems impossible for me not to succumb to it ; I feel how worn out is my mechanism, and it seems that I have only to let myself slip into death.

However, I am better this evening ; I have been in my bath for three hours, I came out of it almost worn out, but with a steady pain in my bosom which has not left me. I was with M. d'Anlezy and the baron de Kock ; they went away to give me a chance of answering, but they do not know whom. Good-night. Your solicitude, your distress, persuade me that, whatever you may say, *we can love each other.* Till to-morrow, I am already waiting for you.

[1] i.e., the news of Guibert's engagement to Mlle de Courcelles.

Letter 123

TO THE SAME

Tuesday, 11.0 *p.m.*, *March*, 1775.

I HAVE refused to go and spend the evening with two people who are in love with each other in order to talk to one whom I love, in order to give my attention to him more peacefully and pleasurably than I could have if people had been here: they would not have had the power to distract me entirely, but it is painful to be drawn away from what pleases and interests one. My friend, solitude has great charms for a fully occupied mind; Heavens, how *strongly* you live when you are dead to everything except to an object which is the whole universe to you, and which takes such complete possession of all your faculties that it is not possible to live in any other time than the present!

Oh! How can you expect me to tell you whether I shall love you in three months' time? How could I use my thoughts to distract myself from my affection? Could you, when I see you, when your presence charms my senses and my heart, expect me to be able to give you an account of the effect your marriage will have on me? My friend, I know nothing about it, nothing at all. If it cured me, I would tell you, and you are just enough not to blame me; if, on the contrary, it brought despair to my heart, I would not complain, and I should suffer a very short time, and then you would be sympathetic and honourable enough to approve a decision which would only cost you a passing regret, and from which your new situation would very quickly distract you; and I assure you I find this thought consoling; I feel freer because of it.

So do not ask me again what I shall do when you

have pledged your life to another; if I was merely vain and conceited, I should be far clearer as to my feelings; for vanity makes very few mistakes in its calculations, it foresees things pretty accurately. Passion has no future; so when I tell you "I love you", I tell you all that I know and all that I feel. I attach no value to the constancy which is compelled by reason, or, still more often, by petty interests of society or vanity, which I despise with all my heart. I have hardly greater esteem for the dull courage which makes one suffer when one might prevent it, and makes one employ one's reason and one's strength in changing a vivid emotion into a cold habit. All this careful manœuvring with oneself, this prudent dealing with the person one loves, seems to me an exercise in falsity and dissimulation, the resource of vanity and the need of weakness.

My friend, you will find nothing of that sort in me: and this, not as a result of reflection; it is the fixed habit of my life, of my character, of my way of living and feeling; in a word, my whole existence makes feigning and constraint impossible to me. I feel very sure that if you had to create a certain state of mind in me, it would not be composed as the result of all this; you would form in me a character more analogous to the step you are going to take; one does not want to find stiffness and strength in one's victims, but weakness and submission. My friend, I feel capable of anything except bending; I should have a martyr's strength, the strength—could I say it! yes—the strength of a criminal to satisfy my passion, or that of my lover; but I find nothing in myself which tells me that I could ever sacrifice my passion. Life is nothing compared with it, and you will see whether this is merely the idle babbling of an over-excited mind! Yes, perhaps these are the thoughts of over-excitement, but to whom

do great deeds belong? Do they belong to reason, which is so far-seeing, so petty, so stupid in its views?

My friend, I am not reasonable, and perhaps it is because I am passionate that I *have* all my life been so reasonable in everything that is subject to the judgment and opinion of the indifferent. How much praise have I unfairly gained for my moderation, my nobility of character, my disinterestedness, the so-called sacrifices I made to the memory of my mother and to the house of Albon! That is how the world judges, how it sees things. Well, Good Heavens, fools that you are, I do not deserve your praises; my soul was not made for the petty interests by which you are occupied; totally devoted to the joy of loving and being loved, I have needed neither strength nor probity to endure poverty and disdain the advantages of vanity. I have so fully enjoyed, so fully realised, the value of life, that if I had to begin again, I should like it to be on the same conditions. Love, suffering; heaven, hell; that is what I would devote myself to, that is what I should wish to feel, that is the climate in which I should like to live, and not the temperate zone inhabited by all the slaves and puppets by whom we are surrounded.

My friend, when I took up my pen, I intended to continue depicting you, and by a loathsome selfishness, I have changed my subject, and depicted myself, letting myself go, like a lunatic, wherever the emotions that animate me might lead; but it is by you that I am animated, by the liveliest, the tenderest, emotion, so I did well to give in to it. I do not know whether I shall send you this long chatter, or give it you; yes, I will give it you. If I sent it, I should be afraid lest you should let me know that you are dining at M. de Beauvau's; how wrong of you that would be!

Letter 124

TO M. DE GUIBERT, HOTEL DE MALTE, RUE TRAVERSIÈRE

Midnight, Sunday, 1775.

What sweetness and pleasure a mind intoxicated with passion can still feel! My friend, I feel sure of it, my life depends upon my madness; if I became calm, if I was restored to reason, I could not live twenty-four hours. Do you know what is the first need of my soul when it has been violently disturbed by pleasure or pain? It is to write to M. de Mora. I restore him and bring him back to life; my heart rests on his, my mind pours itself out into his; the warmth and rapid coursing of my blood brave death; for I see him, he lives, he breathes for me, he hears me, my head is so heated and distracted that I have no more need to delude myself: it is the very truth. Yes, you yourself are not more tangible, not more present to me than M. de Mora has been for the last hour.

Oh divine creature! He has forgiven me, he loves me. My friend, what I have just experienced is another result of the shock which my soul received this afternoon. Heavens, I must cherish and adore the talent which seems to give you a new existence. Oh! no! I am not great enough, not strong enough to praise this heavenly gift! But I still have enough sensibility and passion to enjoy it with transport, and to lay my emotion and feeling before the object who has inspired my life and who still sustains it.

What happiness it is to love! Love is the sole basis of all that is beautiful, of all that is good and great in nature. My friend, M. Roucher has loved; it is passion that has made him sublime. But my heart melts with sadness when the thought comes to me that this exceptional man, this prodigy of nature, knows

misery, that he suffers it, both for himself and in those whom he loves. Oh! such extreme poverty extinguishes love, and it needs a miracle to preserve the energy and spirit that pervade his poems; his heart is made of fire, and one can never feel that it is overwhelmed by misery. I do not know whether it is weakness, but I have just burst into tears when I realised my powerlessness to come to this man's help. If my blood could be changed into gold, his wife and he would have known happiness this evening. Why can I not inspire the comte de Crillon's heart! What a noble use he would make of his wealth! Oh, if only M. de Mora was alive, with what pleasure, with what transport he would have satisfied my heart's desire! Yes, it is with tears of blood that one must weep for such a friend; to adore him is to pay homage to virtue.

But good-bye, my friend; your mind cannot be in tune with mine; you judge me, but I feel. You have just been in a whirl of amusement, and are dulled by amusement, while I have just been inspired by passion. It has worn out my strength, and I do not know where I found enough to scribble at such length. Good-bye.

If you have not changed your mind, I will come and pick you up to-morrow at 5 o'clock at M. d'Argental's; but, above all, my friend, do not merely be complasant, let us have no sacrifices; I am not worthy of them, as you know quite well.

Letter 125

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

9 *p.m.*, *May*, 1775.

I am at last alone, my friend, and can answer you; I have not had the strength to do so all day. And, too,

I could not say a word to you while you were at my house. That visit, so long and so painful for you, passed without my speaking to you. But what a strange, what an inconceivable creature you are! An unheard of mixture of everything that is best and everything that is most unjust! You come to my house in spite of the people whom you know you will meet there. I tell you that they will come at 7 o'clock, and you stay on. Was it, then, to put me to the torture, to spy upon my movements, to have an excuse for filling yourself with bitterness and overwhelming me with reproaches?

You stay on, and the language of Heaven is on your lips; your words caress the young person. You leave her enchanted with you, with your manner, while I am a thousand times tempted to fall at your knees and to beg you to pardon me for your effort. Such is your kindness.

But, afterwards, what could be more cruel than the letter you wrote to me! It poisons all your kindnesses, it overwhelms me. What do you want? What do you demand? You draw a picture of me and of my conduct which makes me shudder. You set me at the side of Lovelace, and all the scoundrels of romance. It is a barbarous toil, and I cannot imagine how you had the strength to carry it out.

I look at myself, I search my own heart, and my heart reassures me. No, I am not as guilty towards you as you imagine. You gratuitously credit me with the intention of tormenting you, of devoting your life to misery, of wanting to make you live on a passion which would satisfy my vanity. You tell me that I have turned and turned again the dagger in your wounds. Is this revolting picture true, good Heavens! So, I delight in your tears, in your convulsions, in your plans of suicide, and in that wretched feeling which

binds you hand and foot to life ? I feed upon them and you give me the mind of an executioner ? I might easily be revolted and indignant ; but I love and I forgive. I love you now, I have loved you, I have been carried off my feet. I have tried to console you. I would have given, and I would still give, my blood for you. Such are my crimes. Read my letters over again, judge me, put yourself back in the circumstances in which your heart and mine were, and then see whether I am a villain. But, thanks to Hell, you turn everything into gall and poison ; you have sworn to feed my soul on them, you want to make the misery which does not come from me fall heavily on it, you do not let me breathe a moment. Hatred would not be more cruel than your activity.

My friend, calm yourself, calm yourself, I beg you. My heart and my health need rest. I have been dreadfully tired by my day. Your letter that I only opened at 2 o'clock has made me ill. My head aches. I am in great discomfort. I should need sleep to calm my woes and above all, my thoughts, which mean always you, first of all. Oh, sleep, sleep yourself too, my friend. May Heaven send us both peaceful sleep and a happier awakening.

5 *a.m.*

My extreme weariness has made me sleep. I have had several hours of solid slumber. I have no fever, my head is free from pain. I await on you, and on the state of your mind to know what mine will be for the rest of the day.

I, your executioner ! Oh, I am your beloved, your best friend. I detest the ill I may have done you. I am innocent of it. I should like to make you live, and to console you.

Letter 126

TO THE COMTE DE GUIBERT

Monday, 10 *o'clock*, *May*, 1775.

I will say, as *Mahomet* did :

> He alone consoles me, he is my recompense.

and, to quote you to yourself, I will say :

> If my friend afflicts me, he will wipe away my tears.

You must not praise me ; if you were pleased with Mme de M . . . you would praise her less, and would think you were quits with her. Good-night. So you have a fever ; that distresses me. I have just been told that you were seen this morning at the house of a painter in enamel, and that the resemblance was striking.

The young person well deserves the sacrifice you have made to her of the time that was needed to have yourself painted in enamel ; but your life will belong to her : it is generous to advance the time. I found her charming, and well worthy of the interest which she inspires in you ; the manners, face, the style, of her mother, are equally amiable and interesting. Yes, you will be happy, and you will see that Mme de M . . . will say to you one day

> So as not to blush at the insults which have been done me,
> I must avenge myself by my benefits alone.

Letter 127

TO M. DE GUIBERT, HOTEL DE MALTE, RUE TRAVERSIÈRE

Monday, 11 *p.m.*, 13 *May*, 1775.

Well, my friend, I have forgiven you, but since it is not from generosity, I am punished ; but is it just that it should be by you ? Tell me your news ; have

you drunk whey ? Have you taken a bath ? Will you take a dose of medicine on Wednesday ? In short, will you, for once, do what you said you would do ? You must realise clearly that you have in you qualities which might well cure one of you, cure one infallibly : this truth is beginning to be proved to me in a way which sometimes terrifies me. Yes, death was nothing; you have made it a dreadful thing. But I turn my thoughts away from the memory which freezes my blood and detaches me from you.

Heavens, I have not seen you ! I was waiting for you and it was a pleasant emotion, when the Prince de Pignatelli arrived. His presence kills me ; the sound of his voice makes me shudder from head to foot. I am filled now with horror, now with sensibility : in short, he disturbed my heart to such an extent as to make me forget that I might have seen you. He only left me at 10 o'clock, and since then I have been in a state of dejection from which you alone can draw me. My friend, have you had the answer to the charming letter which you wrote yesterday morning ? Whatever you may say, you prefer to please rather than to be loved : I have proved it ; you were so amiable then. It seemed that it would be pleasant to be loved ! Oh, what a mistake ! And the regrets which will follow it will inspire the last breath I draw.

I received a perfectly delightful present to-day, and the way in which it was given me was so striking and so original that I must tell you about it. " I am sending you these e . . . . . de R . . . . . which give you so much pleasure, and which consequently you will keep until they no longer please you at all : so I shall learn how long is necessary to make what has given you pleasure displeasing." If the turn of this phrase seems ordinary to you, I know nothing about either wit or originality ; but, for my part, I feel very stupid at

finding an answer ; still, I must at least say thank-you. Do answer for me ; the phrase which you put in my mouth will win me precedence for ever over Mme de Sevigné ; it is the first time I shall have felt any pleasure in winning men's good opinion undeservedly, and in arraying myself in peacock's feathers.

My friend, joking apart, do be witty for me. You understand that it is a man who has sent me this present. I have never written to him ; so he will not make any comparisons. Good-night, you are very amiable : can you guess why ? I am dining myself at Mme de Châtillon's ; I shall be very lifeless, and it is my own fault, for someone said to me to-day : *I am going to supper with her : I never want to do so so much as when I have dined with her.* Which means that enough is not enough. You were fortunate enough to feel such an emotion ; you were much more like the *wretch who loves nothing.* My friend, I want my dictionary and Mme de Anville's letter, and Mme de Boufflers' and my own ; *and after that,* I want to see you. If you want to avoid this detestable society, come at one o'clock or five. I have seen twenty people this afternoon ; I really believe that even severely judged, they are worth about as much as those who have taken up your day.

My friend, except in a single point, let us be reasonable and moderate, if we can.

Letter 128

to the same

Monday, 11 *o'clock, May,* 1775.

My friend, what have you done to me ? I feel so profoundly sad, so wretched, so utterly overwhelmed by the weight of life, that this redoubled uneasiness and pain must come to me from you. The fear which

you cause me, the distrust you inspire in me, are two tortures which ceaselessly put my heart on the rack; and this kind of torment alone would be enough to make me renounce your affection, or at least what seems like affection. I know not what dreadful, what horrible pleasure you take in filling my mind with anxiety; you never try to reassure me, and even when you tell me the truth, you use the accents of a deceiver.

Oh, Heavens! how ill, how sick my mind is! How passionately I long to be delivered, it matters not how, from my present disposition! I wait for, I desire, your marriage; I am like sick people who are condemned to undergo an operation: they see their cure, and forget the violent means by which it is to be procured. My friend, deliver me from the misery of loving you; so often it seems to me that hardly anything is needed to do this, that I feel a kind of shame at having been able to set the interest of my whole life on it; but still more often I feel so chained, so tightly pinioned on every side that not a free movement is left me; and then it is that death seems to be the sole resource and sole help I have against you.

I only wanted to tell you not to come to see me to-day, and I think that that was really your intention. I am spending the evening at M. Bertin's; I am going to *Orpheus*, and during the supper interval at the opera I am going to see Mme de Châtillon, who is still ill. You did not want to dine with me to-morrow, you find two dinners in one week too much. On Wednesday you will tell me the same; well then, do anything you like; I shall do my best for that to give me pleasure too. Good-bye.

Monday, after receiving your letter.

With what kind of poison do you bring me back to life! Is it then a blessing to feel for a moment

pleasure and happiness when there is no longer time left to enjoy them? How cruel you have been! You have kept me alive and you knew that soon afterwards I must no longer live for you.

But, my friend, I ought not to reproach you; you heap praises upon me, and I deserve none of them; no, you must not praise me, you must pity me for being inspired by an emotion which would give a voice to a stone. How can one speak coldly of what one loves? How can one not desire his happiness, his glory, in preference to everything which is only oneself? My friend, you hurt me when you praise me; can you imagine that you can console my heart by flattering my vanity? Heavens, if you only knew that there is no indemnity, no compensation in the whole world for what I desire, for what I fear!

Yes, you do know, for you can see into the bottom of my heart, and you see what fills it, what inspires it and what makes it despair. Good-bye, my friend, your letter is very amiable, it will help me to get through this long day.

Letter 129

to the same

Wednesday midnight, May, 1775.

So the decree is signed![1] Heaven grant that it may have pronounced as surely, as certainly, in favour of your happiness, as it has upon my life! My friend, I can no longer endure my thoughts. You are too much for me; I must flee from you to win back the strength of which you have deprived me.

[1] The signing of the marriage-contract between M. de Guibert and Mlle Boutinon des Hayes de Courcelles. [V-G.]

Good-bye, may you always be so busy and so happy that you may lose the very memory of my misery and my affection. Oh, do nothing more for me; your integrity, your kindnesses, only irritate my grief. Let me love you and die.

Letter 130

TO THE SAME

Thursday, 1775.

Heavens, from what a height your letter came! Is that the tone your happiness would make you take? In that case I would not dare to complain of it, but I only want you to know that it is not in my power to endure protection and compassion; my heart was not fashioned for such baseness; your pity would put the final touch to my misery, so spare me the expression of it. Persuade yourself that you owe me nothing, and that I no longer exist for you. It is not an effort I am asking of you, as you can see; I am asking you only to keep up your usual way of treating me; do not let yourself feel those returning floods of compassion, which blight and abase the object of them even to death.

How are you? Are you going to Versailles? Your *Eulogy* is in a doctor's hands.

Letter 131

TO THE SAME

Sunday, 14*th May*, 1775.

You hurt me, you distress me, you torment me, and then you say that I am used to be too severe with you. Oh, Heavens, I pass over nothing? How dare you

utter such words ? But I forgive you, and although I have not too good an opinion of you, I have a far worse one of myself. I am disturbed, distressed, and my thoughts are so inconsistent as to be almost distracted. I do not know which will hold out longest, my head or my life, but it is impossible to endure so violent a condition. If I told you everything I should frighten you, you would hate me. How suffering I am ! How miserable ! What regrets I have ! How I fear the future ; but it is in my own hands. Farewell, my friend, my head and my mind are in a turmoil ; I can no longer calm myself and in my distress I do not know whether I love you.

Here is the ticket for the Academy. You ought to go and dine at the duchesse d'Anville's ; they are dining at 1 o'clock and everyone is going to the Academy. The good Condorcet will be there. He spent the evening with me yesterday, and will do the same to-day ; but to-morrow I hope he will not be so kind, while you will be kind enough to come to-morrow and tell me if I can count on you in the evening.

Letter 132

to the same

Sunday midnight, 14 May, 1775.

Let me know, or if you are strong enough, tell me yourself, how you spend to-night. I hope it will be free from fever. I have just seen, on looking into my books, that *Roman camomile* will not poison you ; it is soothing, and is used in cases of colic ; so tell me whether it has relieved you now.

Marriage will do wonders for you ; your wife's interest, the interest of everything by which you will

be surrounded, will compel you to look after your health more carefully. You were already enjoying the pleasures of home-life to-day; you did well not to leave them for the Opera; it was purgatory.

That music is pale in colour; my friend Grètry must keep to the sweet and agreeable style, the tender, the witty; it is quite enough, and when one's stature, though short, is well-proportioned, it is dangerous, and certainly ridiculous, to get up on stilts; you fall on your nose and the passers-by laugh. And you will note that this is not a contradiction but really a confirmation of my enthusiasm for *Zémire and Azor*, for the *Friend of the House*, for the *False Sorcery*, etc., etc.

I do not know whether you have had these instructions; they are not for sale, so I am sending you them. I received to-day two letters which have overwhelmed me, but filled my heart. Imagine what dates they bore! *Madrid, 3 May, 1774, as I enter the carriage to see you;* and the other: *From Bordeaux, 23 May, 1774, on my arrival, almost dead.* And I receive them a year after their date. It seems like a miracle to me; it seems that it must be a fresh warning. It disturbs me, it fills my mind. I answer *Yes*, and yet I thank Heaven for allowing me to live long enough to gather up once more all that was dearest and most sacred to me in the universe.

You keep to your room, so it will be less tiresome for you to look out and put together my letters. Please do not refuse me this moment's trouble; be certain that I will not abuse your kindness. I am expecting to go out to-morrow at midday, and to come in again at four o'clock, after which I shall not go out. I do not permit myself the wish to see you; what I do want, in preference to my own pleasure, is your well-being, your happiness, your wish, and even your whim, so easy to get on with do I make myself.

Letter 133

TO THE SAME

1775.

I THANK you for having given me news of you; I needed it. I had tried three methods of getting it, and had not succeeded: I had reckoned on going to see you, but waited to know what you wished, and you did not tell me. If you had wanted to see me this evening, I should have been to see you, but I am like the man in the Gospel: I wait and must be told to come, and I come. Therefore, tell me if you want me to come to your house to-morrow at one, or at five o'clock; it will be as I go to, or come back from, M. de Vaines. I am afraid the note you have written me may have tired you. But do not let them give you a dose of medicine so soon, it would inflame your bowels. Good-night, if you stay at home this evening, as I hope, you really ought to have told me so; but apparently you had no need for me to know it, so everything is all right.

M. d'Alembert has just won the greatest success at the Academy. He read Bossuet.[1]

M. de Duras made a speech which was highly applauded; it was precise, noble, simple and becoming. I have here a detachment from the Academy. I will send to your house to-morrow at eight, and M. d'Alembert will go at ten or eleven. For my part, I shall not go unless you tell me to. Good-bye; sleep to-night, rest, calm yourself, and forget, if you must, everyone who is suffering.

[1] *The Eulogy of Bossuet*, composed by d'Alembert. [V-G.]

Letter 134

TO THE SAME

Monday, 11 *p.m.*, 15 *May*, 1775.

Oh! Heavens, no, I have not been to the Academy; I wanted to see you during the sitting, and you did not wish it. I saw people intoxicated with delight, and I was full of sadness; I was disturbed. You were suffering, and felt no need to see me; that was what I felt, and I but ill understood all that was being said around me.

M. d'Alembert will tell you of his success. He will tell you of the lively pleasure it gave him to make the Archbishop of Toulouse applaud frantically. The Archbishop wept with joy and gratitude at it. I love this emotion. It is assuredly one of the happiest moments of his life. I am very glad of it, but only with my thoughts, and my mind is suffering, and pleasure can no longer find a way into it; you, my friend, have set the final seal of grief upon it, but I do not want to talk to you about myself.

Tell me news of how you spend the night; I much hope it has been a good one. Have you at least been free from fever? And would you like me to see you at one or at five? Tell me. But above all, put no constraint upon yourself.

Has madame de M . . . gone away to the country?

Letter 135

TO THE SAME

An hour after midnight, *May*, 1775.

No, my friend, I will not go to bed without making you share the esteem, the respect, the enthusiasm which fill me and excite me. Oh! how beautiful it is, how

virtuous, how noble! What admiration I feel for *Marcus Aurelius*, what esteem for his virtuous panegyrist[1]! Read it, and do not come and freeze me by remarks upon its style or taste.

The King absolutely must read it; I have already taken steps to bring it about, and I hope my desire will be fulfilled; and, in truth, it is not for M. Thomas' sake that I wish it. The excellent man needs only the delights which his virtue gives him. You can well believe I have just sent him *two words* about his *Eulogy*. My friend, if my death warrant were signed for to-morrow, I should still feel the need to honour and cherish talent and virtue. You can think me mad if you like; it is at any rate the kind of madness which inspired the object of my adoration for eight years. Oh! I feel bitterly the truth of Montaigne's words: it seems to me, when I feel things, when I enjoy them alone, *that I steal his share away from him*.

Good-night, till one-thirty to-morrow, at latest; you will give me back the *Eulogy*, I do not want to be parted from it. Heavens, it has been the same with me to-day in my thoughts of you. Nothing could distract me from them. Oh! how wretched I should be if my heart turned completely in that direction! I should need courage, to tear myself from what I am going to lose for ever. Good-bye, may these dreadful thoughts never find a lodging in your heart.

Letter 136

to the same

Tuesday, 11 *p.m.*, 21 *May*, 1775.

Oh! Heavens, leave me, follow the promptings of your anger, go. I need rest; you disturb me; I am

[1] Thomas.

displeased with you. I hate myself for it. I feel remorse. Oh! why did I meet you? Then I should have had only one misery, or rather, I should no longer feel any. I should be freed from a life which I loathe, and to which I am only kept by an emotion which puts my soul to torment.

What have I done to-day? What have I thought? What have I felt? Alas, I have not seen you, so I have only known the regret, the grief, and the despair of fearing you and longing for you. Good-bye, do not come to see me: my heart is distressed, and you never calm me. You understand neither the tender interest which consoles and supports, nor the kindness and truth which inspire confidence and restore rest to a heart profoundly wounded and distressed. How you hurt me! How deeply I need not to see you again! If you are an honourable man, go to-morrow, after dinner. I will see you in the morning, that is quite enough.[1]

Letter 137

to the same

Saturday, 1 July, 1775, before the post.

The agitation and distress of my thoughts and my mind have for long deprived me of the use of my faculties. I felt what Rousseau said: that there are situations for which there are neither words nor tears. I spent a whole week in the convulsions of despair; I thought I should die, I wanted to die and death seemed easier to me than to give up loving you. I forbade myself to make complaints or reproaches; it seemed to me

[1] M. de Guibert was about to leave for the chateau of Courcelles-le-Roi, where his marriage took place, 1 June, 1775. [V-G.]

that it would be base to talk of my misery to the man who was the voluntary cause of it. If you had pitied me, I should have been humiliated, if you had not cared my whole soul would have been revolted ; in a word, I felt that if I was to keep within bounds at all, I must be silent, and wait for you. Possibly I was wrong, but I thought that in circumstances like this you owed me some attention, and, without crediting you with much tenderness or much interest for me, I thought I must reckon on what common decency and my misery would suggest to you.

So I waited ; and after you had been absent more than ten days, I received from Courcelles a note which is a masterpiece of coldness and harshness. I was angered by it, it made me hate you ; soon I hated myself, when I came to think that it was for you—forgive me—yes, for you, whom I found to be both cruel and dishonourable, that I had had the power to make myself so guilty towards one who was more worthy of love than anyone who ever lived. I loathed myself, life seemed no longer endurable, I was distraught with hatred and remorse, and in my despair I decided within myself on the day, the moment, when I should deliver myself from the weight which crushed me. I looked death in the face, it was the end of all my woes. That terrible moment must make all passions silent, for, from that moment, I felt cold and calm. I promised myself not to open your letters again ; I wished not to let myself dwell any more on what I had loved : my last days were to be spent in adoring what I had lost and, in fact, I was no longer haunted by thoughts of you.

Still, if I managed to have a few moments' sleep, I was awakened, in terror, by the sound of those awful words : *Live, live, I am not worthy to hurt you as I do.* No, no, I cried, you were not worthy to be loved :

but *I* must have been madly in love to be so guilty. I see you to-day as you are, I see that you have committed a vile action for the sake of 12,000 francs a year; I see that you were not afraid of reducing me to despair, if you could use me as a stop-gap during a period which you wanted to use for breaking a connection which you could not keep up when you married; and if you could introduce some decency into your behaviour towards madame de Montsauge you cared little whether you dragged me in the mud, and made me lose the only good thing left to me: my self-esteem.

You have been cruel enough to keep me alive, and to attach me to you; no doubt so as to make death more necessary to me. Oh! how cruel, how wicked, you seemed to me! How little it cost me to leave you and give up life! "But why should I die?" I sometimes said to myself, when I changed round and felt that I was loved and surrounded by people who would be glad to give me consolation and happiness. "Why should I let the man whom I hate think that I could not live without loving him? If I died, I should not even avenge myself, for he knows neither remorse nor virtue." I felt my mind gain strength the farther I went from you. Such was my state of mind when the package addressed to M. de Vaines arrived. It brought me back to a pleasanter emotion; it must certainly be opened since it contained the *Eulogy of Catinat*. I know not whether from weakness or from decent feeling, but I persuaded myself that although I no longer owed you anything I could not refuse you attention in a matter in which you had come to me for aid. I thought that my resentment ought not to let me fail in an undertaking which was imposed upon me by the confidence you had shown in me.

So it was a moral scruple which made me open the package. I saw your letter inside, open; and I read

it. It was straightforward, but cold; it might have been full of feeling, and then I should have had to fight against my resolution; it did better, it strengthened me in it. I continued my efforts for your *Eulogy*, and found a sort of pleasure in enjoying the kind of interest which inspired me. I was not satisfying you, or my emotion, but I was gratifying my pride. "So I have strength enough," I said to myself, "to oblige and serve one whom I hate and who has done me harm? And my method of doing it will certainly not oblige him."

The thought kept up my courage; I felt so full of strength against you, that I read your letter again, and far from my heart being softened by it, it became sterner, when I saw how slight were the interest and regret you showed. I judged it without passion, for it did not irritate me, it merely proved to me that I had taken the only honest and reasonable course. So I continued to take steps to ensure the success of your business, and did it so actively as to make M. de Condorcet think I was inspired by the most lively interest.

I received your letter from Bordeaux, and I thought that I had no need to fear its effects, that on the contrary you would give me new reasons for leaving you. So I opened it eagerly: it was short, and although quite lacking in emotion, it showed regret which had some decency in it; I was not touched by it, but it made me calmer. All the better if he is honourable, I said to myself; if he can seem less guilty in my eyes, I shall be less humiliated. My heart does not need to hate him, it was torture; indifference will give me rest again, and that state of mind will perhaps put me into a condition to enjoy the consolations which are offered me. I must give myself up to the attentions of friendship, I must respond to the advances of

people whom I ought to have repulsed ; I must please them, and this occupation will distract me from thoughts which have for so long blighted and crushed my mind.

So, following these reflections, I laid down for myself a way of living to which I have so far been faithful and which I find quite successful. I lead a more sociable life ; I give myself to everything that turns up ; I am always surrounded by people who love me, who stick to me not because I am lovable but because I am unhappy. They do me the honour to believe that I am still overwhelmed by the loss which I have suffered ; they seem to rejoice at the efforts I am making to cure myself ; they are grateful to me for my courage, they praise me for it, they take pleasure in being with me ; they carry me away, so to speak, from my grief, by not leaving me by myself for a moment.

Yes, I can see, the greatest blessing, the only blessing, is to be loved : it is the only balm for a lacerated heart. But nothing, I feel, nothing in the whole of nature will extinguish the emotion which has made up my life for so many years. The need to deliver myself from the torture and the remorse which you cause me, will make me seek out aids which I had thrown on one side. In short, I hope, I feel, that a very clear, a very definite, will has more power than I had thought. Twenty times I had been tempted to give you up, but I had never been honest with myself ; I indeed wanted to suffer no longer, but I had never adopted the right method of curing myself : you have provided me with a most powerful one, in very truth. Your marriage by laying bare your whole soul to me, has driven away mine and closed it for ever. There was a time when I should have preferred you to be unhappy than contemptible : that time is past.

Oh ! No ! Do not imagine that I may follow your

advice, and take my models from the novels of Mme Riccoboni ; women who are led astray by lightness or wantonness may indeed behave according to the maxims and principles of a novel. They delude themselves, they imagine that they are kind, are generous, when they are merely cold, base and contemptible , they have not loved, they could not hate ; in a word; they only understand gallantry, their souls have never been able to scale the heights of love and passion, and Mme Riccoboni herself has never reached so high, even in imagination.

Heavens ! How you wounded me by your comparison of my misery to that situation in a novel ! How cold and lacking in decency you seemed ! How far superior to you I thought myself, as I felt myself capable of a passion which you could not even judge ! But I must close this long letter which will put you in a position to judge of my present state more sanely. I have given you an account of all that I have felt ; I have been as truthful in this as in all my relations with you, and as a consequence of this same truth which I hold sacred, I will not tell you that I want your friendship, nor that I feel any towards you ; such a sentiment can only have sweetness and charm when it is founded on confidence and esteem, and you know whether your actions and behaviour must have inspired me with *them*. Good-bye, grant me the moment of pride and vengeance which makes me find pleasure in telling you that I forgive you, and that it is no longer in your power to make me know fear, in whatever form. I am sending with this three letters which I beg you to read again ; not that I have any claim, or any wish, to rouse your regret or interest ; but I want you to shudder once at all the ill you have brought upon me. May the recollection make you a better man !

I demand, and your conscience will tell you that I have the right, that you send back these four letters under cover of M. de Vaines' envelope, and with a double address, by return of post.

Letter 138

TO THE SAME

Monday evening, 3 July, 1775.

When Saturday's post arrived, I had just written you a volume, and I shall not spare you it, even though your letter has made me change, not my way of thinking, but my manner of feeling. Still I was astounded when I read that you only *seemed* to be guilty towards me, and that my misery called forth your *indulgence*; *you* utter these words, and *I* am dying of grief at your harshness and injustice! Oh! Heavens, where shall I find the strength I need? There is nothing on which my mind can rest, no fixed point by which it can steer. I do not hate you, I spend my life in condemning you, in suffering, in cursing the life to which you have bound me.

Oh! Why did I ever meet you? Why have you made me so guilty and so miserable? And then you coldly say that I am *miserable!* Does nothing tell you that you are the one who has made my misery irrevocable? And you dare to call the silence of despair, the prostration of death, a *detestable caprice!*

Alas! I have loved you with such utter abandon, my heart has been so completely distracted from any other interest but my passion, that it is an unheard of insult for you to call the emotion which makes me draw away from you, a caprice. What? Do you not even

understand the language of the feelings which inspire me ? At the very time when you seem to want to bring me back to you, you wound my heart, you bruise my soul by the expressions you use. Take care lest it should show a lack not of delicacy only, but of common morality, to complain of me when I am struck down by you. It is, you say, neither irritation nor gratitude which makes you pursue me, but the tenderest affection. Oh ! If that were true, should I be in the depths of despair ? No, you are mistaken, I think, for while you do not share my feelings, or even need to be loved as much as I love, it costs you a little to give up being the first, the only, object of an active and passionate heart which brings, if not interest, at any rate emotion, into your life.

Yes, however restless and given up to amusement his life, a man still feels a void when he ceases to be loved by a heart strong enough to suffer, and tender enough to pardon anything. I was not generous enough or cold enough to pardon you the misery by which I am torn, but I had had enough common-sense to seek calm in silence ; my heart was so sick that I hoped that the need of rest would lead me gently back to indifference. I thought it not impossible that if I stopped seeing you and talking to you, you would at last lose your power to mislead my reason and agitate my heart. Heavens, what use do you want to make of this power ? No doubt to cause the misery of my life, and, if you were honourable, the distress of your own ; it needs a vanity more extreme than I could ever arouse to want to keep alight an affection which one cannot share.

You know quite well that my heart does not understand moderation : so to want to make me take an interest in you is to condemn me to the tortures of the damned. You would like the impossible : that I should love you madly, and yet that reason should

govern all my emotions; is that in nature? Only the feelings one makes with one's head can be perfect, and you know well whether I can pretend! Whether I want to claim anything unfairly! Whether I should wish to owe my whole life's happiness to behaviour which would not be dictated to me by the tenderness of my affection or the violence of my passion! You know quite well, you can see it clearly, I have not even the use of my intelligence with the man I love.

But I am talking too much of myself. I want to learn from you all that I have for so long been ignorant of; you owe me an account of your thoughts, your actions, your feelings; yes, I have a right to all this. How could you stop when you were writing to me? And you say that *your heart and your mind were full!* And to whom will you open your heart? Is there anyone in the world who can understand you better than I can? I was seized with terror again at what you said about the *Constable*, and sent to the maréchal de Duras who repeated that the *Constable* would be played, that you would be given leave at the end of the month, and that you would go to Metz in September to finish your period of service; he has written by the last post to tell you all this, and I repeat it for my own satisfaction.

So you think you have *presumed too much on my zeal*, and I know not what? How ungrateful you are! If my honour and my life had depended on it, I could not have been so active. There are fifteen *Eulogies of Catinat* entered for the competition, but only one of them disturbs me. I am to read it to-morrow, and I promise I will send you my opinion *under seal;* we shall see whether I agree with the Academy. In order to judge sanely, I shall leave *hate* and *love* out of it, and then you shall see whether I am intelligent. Have you not taken up the *Gracchi* again? And even

if *all ambition is extinguished* in you, do you not hope that that work will add a great deal to your reputation ?

Now tell me why you say that your powers are so extinguished ? Can it already be the power of that great extinguisher, which causes the comte de Crillon to find it so happy a fate to exist only to be the husband of madame de Crillon ? No doubt it is a great blessing, but it does not make him more witty, gay or lovable. But what matter ? He is happy, and it is a happiness I would not have envied him. Is it a fact that there is a woman at Libourne who is intelligent ?

M. de Vaines is to send back to you all the originals of the work you did for M. Turgot. Do not let yourself imagine that I have forgotten M. Dumouriez' memoir ; I sent it him immediately ; I wrote with more interest than I shall ever show for myself, or my own fortunes ; I have begged them not to answer me at once, because only refusals can be so prompt. In short, *Sir*, I have thought that *I would be* one of your friends, and the thought has not allowed me to leave anything undone to ensure success.

How absurd you would be, if you were not the most lovable person in the world. Your letter is a mixture of confidence in my affection and of distrust of it ever having been possible to love you, which is too amusing ; it is so pretty a tone, and so confident ! It brought back to my mind : *Phyllis, what has become of the time*, etc., etc. I do not know whether you love me, but you are almost as inconsistent as I am ; can it be that I carry you off your feet ? If you knew all that you have lost by my silence ! I do not mean the proofs of my affection, but your curiosity would have been so amused, so interested ! I have seen and heard so much since you went away ! I said to myself : I should find all this full of life and interest, if I could tell him about it, but since I must not speak to him,

it is not worth while to listen ; and indeed I withdrew into my own soul, where I found very ill company : remorse, regret, hatred, pride, and everything that can make one detest life.

I want you to tell me with which letter you *began ;* I should be in despair if it was this one ; you would only read the rest like last year's papers ; and I shall have offended you, I *hope* ; I shall have revolted you ; you will have hated me, that is something ; but the folly and the weakness is to cancel at once what I none the less said with all the truth of my soul.

Oh ! When I told you that you were in the competition, a word escaped me for which I have seriously reproached myself ! Indeed, how can one call " *my friend* " a person whom one *hates* more than anything in the world ? What reminiscence can bring about such a thing ? It is inconceivable. Can it be that this hatred is the first link in the chain which does not leave a moment's liberty to the wretches who have been captivated in spite of themselves ? You have not *intelligence* enough to imagine all that one suffers when one is seriously in love with a man who would deserve to be loved only by women whose vanity he would flatter, while he never filled their hearts. That is how people love, that is what is called lovable, and I know not how it is that when everything is so pleasing on all sides, one is still bored to death in the midst of all these people.

My friend, yes, the friend dearest to my heart, let us be no longer on bad terms ! Let us forgive each other ! We have still reason to be indulgent ; but remember that I am very ill and very unhappy : if you want me to live, help me, sustain me, make me forget all the harm you have done me. Answer me, you owe me a volume. Good-bye, good-bye ; are you not tired out ?

Letter 139

TO THE SAME

Tuesday, 4 *July*, 1775.

I am very sorry, but, my friend, why do you ask the *impossible* of me? Give me the opportunity of being useful to you in a thing which you consider right, and I answer that it shall be done, and without any intervention of mine; you will only have to say the word. If you only knew what it costs me to keep you in ignorance of a thing which would fill me with joy, if my heart was still capable of such a feeling! But it is a blessing, a pleasure, in which my thoughts find content, and which makes all that is honourable, all that can feel, in me, rejoice. My friend, if you were here, I should not be honourable, for I should entrust to you a secret which I ought to keep.

People must suspect my interest in you, for when I was told of the importance of the secret, my informant added: *A secret for every body, for M. de Guibert.* I laughed at this condition, and said: so he is not included in *everybody*? "No, no, not *for you*!" And you see they were quite right, only you are the only person in the world to whom I can say that I am dying of regret at not being able to tell it. I have here that *Eulogy of Catinat.* Heavens, how frail is the morality of passion! Here am I, in gratitude for the proof of confidence which the author gives me, wanting his work to be good, but only good enough to allow of no doubt between him and you.

My friend, I will tell you my real feeling, but I do not answer for its being the truth; you know very well that I have no taste, and very little common-sense; so you will judge my judgment as it deserves. What do you think of this torrent of writing? Would you

not have better reason to complain of excess than of famine? Good-bye. If I do not have a letter to-morrow, there is no justice in the world.

Letter 140

TO THE SAME

Thursday, 6 July, 1775.

I had no news of you yesterday, my friend. You have grown tired of talking to me, while I have too soon tired of keeping silent; if I had had a little more courage, all my grief, all my struggles would perhaps not have been wasted. But, Heavens, tell me, if you know, how this torture will end? Will it be in hatred, in indifference, or in death, that I shall find deliverance? My friend, I do not want to be generous by halves, I think I have forgiven you, so I am going to talk to you as if I were pleased with you.

I am going to tell you that the following news will be very shortly made public: that M. de Malesherbes succeeds to all the duc de la Vrillière's positions; the latter will hand in his resignation in a few days' time; he has still to pay a visit to the Assembly of the Clergy which is to be worth twenty thousand francs to him. M. de Malesherbes will resign from the Cour des Aides, and M. de Barentin will succeed him. If you knew what candour and simplicity M. de Malesherbes has shown in accepting this post, your esteem, your liking, your veneration for that excellent man would be redoubled.

Anyway, be sure that good will come of it, and will be *well done*, because virtue and love of the common weal will be directed by intelligence. Never, no never, have two men of greater virtue, enlightenment,

disinterestedness, activity, been brought together and inspired more deeply by a greater and loftier enthusiasm. You will see, their ministry will leave a deep mark on the mind of man. All I am telling you is still a secret ; the choice will be received with delight by the public ; some people will be furious at it, but they will keep quiet. Intriguers will have very little chance ; it is touching ! What a poor time it will be for rogues and courtiers ! Is not that a delicate distinction ? It is splitting hairs.

Now, listen and tremble, for I am about to judge two *Eulogies of Catinat* which will be, as I imagine, the only ones to win the attention of the Academy. The authors of these two *Eulogies* are M. de Guibert, and M. de la Harpe. M. de Guibert is the author of an admirable work on tactics and of a tragedy. These two works have made him known as a man full of tact and intelligence, and they give evidence throughout of a lofty mind and one full of energy ; it is in the light of this knowledge and of the prejudice it must give one in M. de Guibert's favour, that I have read and judged his *Eulogy of Catinat.* You know M. de la Harpe better than I do ; you know that he is an excellent *littérateur* who is endowed with much intelligence, and above all with a most enlightened and correct taste ; such is the justice I rendered him before reading his *Eulogy of Catinat.* Now listen to the sentence which blind, silly, stupid, presumption has dared to pronounce, and see whether you will be irritated by it, or decide to disdain this *decree.*

M. de la Harpe's *Eulogy* is written with his usual fluency, but with a correctness which he dispensed with when he had not M. de Guibert as a rival. His style is at once fluent and lofty ; it is so rare for these two merits to be combined, at any rate to such a degree, that I think one might say that he writes in

prose as Racine wrote in verse. It is the work of a man of letters whose intelligence is just and wise, whose mind is kindly, straight and lofty; there are in it a mass of happy phrases, of touching thoughts, of fine ideas expressed clearly and nobly; but it is only the work of an admirable writer; while M. de Guibert's seems to me the work of an exceptional man who has more than intelligence, I mean genius.

Neither of them is a philosopher, the one because he does not think coldly enough, the other because he does not think sufficiently deeply: but M. de Guibert's mind judges men and events with such imperiousness and such energy that one prefers to be carried off one's feet by it than to be enlightened by a philosopher. The military part is so well treated by M. de Guibert that even the most ignorant can consider themselves, as they read, in a position to appreciate Catinat's merit. In M. de la Harpe, that part is vague, tiresome and very dull. When one reads M. de la Harpe, one is pleasantly occupied and sometimes touched: one esteems the author's talent. When I read M. de Guibert, I feel my mind expand, grow stronger, take on fresh activity and energy. But sometimes he goes too far, his style is not always clear enough or correct enough, it sometimes lacks harmony; one comes across phrases which are either too familiar, or too risky.

If the prize was given for the art of writing, for eloquence of style, for the best constructed work, one would, I think, have to crown M. de la Harpe; but if it was given to eloquence of mind, to the strength and loftiness of genius, to the work which will have the greatest effect, one would have to crown M. de Guibert. If I did not know the authors, I should spend my life in wishing to be, or regretting not to be M. de Guibert, and I should not even take the trouble to find out

whether M. de la Harpe lives in Paris. My friend, I am dying of impatience for you to be in a position to judge my judgment ; but I ask your word of honour that you will not communicate it to anyone, not even to the person who is dearest to you ; I do not want to have the mortification, or the *glory* which was caused me by my judgment of the two *Eulogies of La Fontaine*, a judgment which you thought, as was natural, both dull and absurd. You shall say the same of this, if you like, but not let anyone else say it.

My friend, I have no pride, no pretentions, with you ; it suits me to be stupid and I let myself go ; but with others, I do not bother myself—for I have not the strength—but I do not talk to them ; I content myself with saying : that is good, mediocre, or bad, and take good care not to give any reason ; indeed, that would bore me as much as I should bore them. And what is the good of having intelligence among people who do not touch my heart.

Indeed it is *I* who am extinguished. My heart is still inspired by grief, but it has still no warmth ; I have lost the man who warmed me, who enlightened me, who exalted me ; I have nothing left but memories which cover everything with crape. Oh ! my friend, M. de Mora is gone, and you have prevented me from following him ! Through what fatality did I inspire in you an interest which has become so deadly for me.

Friday, 7 July.

I am forgetting to tell you that M. de Sartine is to become a member of the Council : this is meant to console him. I told you a few days ago that I was surrounded by my friends ; since the day before yesterday the desertion has been complete. Inspections, regiments, estates, the waters, have taken all away from me. Still the ambassador remains to me,

and I see him every day, but he is too gay for me, he thwarts my disposition. The good Condorcet is back; after long interviews with his dear uncle, it has been agreed that the good Condorcet should marry whenever he wants to; such *tyranny* is endurable. He has submitted to being *presented to the King*, and to making his valet wear mourning because the *eldeſt son of the houſe is dead*, and after these conditions and promises, he took leave of his uncle, who conſoles himſelf for having a nephew in the Academy because he has learned that he is the intimate friend of a miniſter. Heavens, what folly! It makes one groan when it does not make one laugh.

My friend, some day I will tell you about an occasion when I loſt my temper on your account. And yet they said hardly more than I allowed myself to write to you a week ago, and it roused me to fury. I spoke harshly, insultingly, made enemies; but no matter, I was pleased with myself, I defended you. It seemed to me to be the height of injuſtice and insolence to dare to criticise you. I should like to have the sole right to think ill of you; I should like others to judge you to be what I feel you are, noble, great, elevated, and never to say of you: *He is amiable.* Oh! How ſtupid is such praise. It is deſtructive of all real merit. "He is amiable" means when translated and when spoken by men of the world: he is frivolous, of no account and without any character. Such are the amiable people of this country. But we shall become better, I am absolutely sure of it.

Good-bye, my friend; you will laugh at me for having kept from you a secret which everyone will tell you, but if you have not become *too provincial* you will know that in a secret of such a kind three days may be very important; besides I promised, and morality ought not to argue. Tell me whether you have had

precise news from La Bretèche, and whether you are pleased with it. Is the friendship still as tender as it is generous ? I am mightily curious about one thing : I should like to see one of . . .'s letters. But new duties no doubt force you to fail in confidence. Well, so be it, but do at least not fail in the truth, and I promise that I will never put you to so humiliating a necessity.

I hope that I shall have news of you to-morrow : it will be a very dry and cold note, it will displease me, and perhaps to such an extent that I shall bitterly reproach myself for my return towards you. I ought to have believed you, *you were not worthy to hurt me as you did ;* these words lay bare the very depths of your soul, and would throw light upon a ten years' relationship ; it was what *Clarissa* said on her deathbed to *Belfort*, the friend of *Lovelace*, and that thought made them find death consoling and necessary. But good-bye ; Richardson understood men, love and passion ; Mme Riccoboni understands only self-love, pride and sometimes sensibility : but that is all.

Letter 141

to the same

Monday, 10 *July*, 1775.

Well then, finish tearing my heart to pieces !

In truth, how wretched I am ! How unseasonably I speak, how out of my reckoning I am ! Into what an error, good Heavens, have I fallen. *It was enough for you*, you say, with more delicacy than sensibility, *to receive a blank sheet of paper;* and my ill-fortune has willed that when you were telling me of your wish, I was being led on to tell you all my thoughts, all my

feelings ; I was suffering, my mind was tired, and it turned towards the man who wounded it. Oh, my friend, you will not understand me, you will answer me badly, I shall hate you the more vigorously the weaker I have shown myself. So stop tormenting me, you do too much and yet too little ; allow an emotion which you do not want, which you cannot share, to die out.

Heavens, but for this accursed *Eulogy of Catinat* I was cured ; I should have gone no further than that infamous note from Courcelles, the remembrance of which still makes me tremble with anger ; I should have known nothing more of you, and at least, in that deep silence, I should have had the strength to cure myself, or to die. My friend, you are very blameworthy, for coldly, very coldly, you cause me a life of despair. After having told me that you know I am suffering, you add that you need to live in the country, and that your present state of mind will last a long time. What ? You know that you are driving me to despair, and yet you think of yourself ? You could want to go into the country, and not to see me ! Is this true ? And if it is true, why do you tell me so ? You ought to say nothing to me of a thing which must revolt my heart, yes, you ought, for do not imagine that there is only one kind of duty, and that one is fulfilling them all when one has satisfied those which have personal interest as their object, and those which are subject to the judgment of the world. No doubt, that is quite enough for vulgar and vain hearts which find their ideas of happiness in money alone, and of consideration only in the approbation of the fools who surround them. But *I* shall always appeal to your conscience, and my conscience will judge you when my passion is silent.

My friend, you hurt me ; your letters are cold, sad and selfish ; you have said not a word which came from your heart. So why has mine abandoned itself to you ?

In short, tell me why I love you, when I have such strong reasons not to love you ; and yet it is not as most women love, from stupid and dull vanity, or lack of occupation. Heaven is my witness that the thing which humiliates me most in the world is the thought of the *crime*, yes, the crime, which attracted me to you. As for emptiness and lack of occupation, I know nothing of them ; my heart would be occupied for a hundred years with what I have loved and lost, and my life would be full of a thousand interests, if I wished it ; I repulse, put aside incessantly one who would like to find a way into my heart. So, you can see that it is by a very special fatality that I am condemned to the torture which is killing me ; while as for you, you make yourself a cool spectator of it, you were quite used to having no sign of life from me. *One sheet* of blank paper answered to all that you thought and felt for me, my friend ! And I have written you volumes ; can you imagine the clumsiness and the folly of my conduct ? I am in confusion at it, but I want to avenge myself a little by telling you that in the letter which I am answering, that of the 1st July, there is something which is in *dreadful taste*. Bad taste would be nothing, if it were not allied to a far greater defect than taste and good manners. Oh ! I am keeping it for you, and if, when I confound you, you do not hate me, you must be a very good fellow.

Yes, you are kind, you are good : oh ! you are also very cruel, very hard, very inconsistent ; but a thing you are more than anything else and that makes up for everything, is that you are a g . . . f . . .[1] I dare not write the words in full. It seems to me that it is as if I said : I am mad, and you would be so capable of believing it ! And one is too much at one's ease with lunatics. I want to irritate you, I want to

[1] "b . . . e . . ." i.e. "good fellow."

tyrannise over you, I want to make you suffer for one day what you are making me suffer all my life.

But, by the way, I have not yet said anything about the ring you gave me when you went away; it was the symbol, the emblem, of all that has happened. I placed it on my finger, and two hours afterwards it was broken. It is no joke, it was a very ill omen to me, and if the *Sancy* had been mine, and I had lost it, certainly I should not have been so worried. Come now, my friend, give me a ring strong and lasting as my affection; the one you gave me was too much like yours, it hung only by a thread.

I have read your letter to the good Condorcet: it is obliging and just as it should have been. *So you love nothing but study any longer*, and yet, *you disdain fame?* In truth, you are a great philosopher, when you are sad. But this winter you will be so happy, so rich, so gay, so dissipated! Then there will be no more talk of this deep philosophy. Oh! no! Your life is not so far gone, your head is still very young: it still needs to be purged of many things which often lead your heart astray.

My friend, I am very impertinent, am I not? I criticise you incessantly, but I love you better than those who always praise you. M. d'Alembert loves you as if I consented to it. Good-bye; write to me, now, and long letters.

Letter 142

To the same

Tuesday, 11 *July*, 1775.

I have done my exercise in two ways, and as both the subject and the object of it are not entirely

indifferent to you, I am sending you this specimen. I do not think it is very different from my first judgment, but still there must be some difference: for last time I wrote just after reading M. de la Harpe, and this time just after reading you. Judge whether I have grasped things better, whether I have been more, or less, stupid; in short, my friend, condemn me, but do not say that I am not so full of you as to weary you.

M. de Malesherbes will not take possession till Saturday or Sunday. He has been to say farewell to his solitude at Malesherbes, and I imagine he will not have done so without deep regret. An *ambitious* man will have difficulty in believing that one can make sacrifices when one becomes a minister; but if you know M. de Malesherbes, you will say that I am telling the truth.

Good-bye, my friend. I am going to send to the General Post Office; I wrote you a volume yesterday; to-morrow I shall have four lines from you, very dry and perhaps very harsh. Oh well, whatever they are like, I await them with more impatience than you show when you have a pleasure to come. I am giving orders for my letters to be brought to Mme de Geoffrin's; when they come, and until they come, I shall have very little wit for conversation; my eyes and my heart are riveted to the door and on the hands of everyone who enters the room. My friend, is there then no way of living fully but in suffering? Heavens! I have known another way; what a mixture of sweetness and regret the memory of it is!

I have just written to La Bretèche, and you are not there. Would you believe it? The Chevalier did not ask for news of you. That annoys me. Guess the woman about whom they were talking yesterday, when someone said—but it is hardly worth while to

go into details :—" Mme So-and-so is a cushion on a chair." And it is strikingly true.

Now good-bye ; I find it impossible to leave you. Do not tear up or lose my important criticisms.

Letter 143

To the same

Wednesday evening, 12 *July*, 1775.

Tell me, can there be any good reason for your not writing by this post ? You owed it to me to answer my information that your *Eulogy* was in the competition ; and then you owed it to me to . . . Oh ! no ! You owed nothing, since the cry of grief has not touched your heart. You have done well not to answer me ; you would have wounded me, and I am only distressed. I remember that I told you then that were you the cruellest and most unjust of men, I should never reproach myself for the impulse which was torn from me by despair ; and you are silent, and it is by keeping silent that you expect to console a mind that is at once overwhelmed and torn in pieces.

But if you were guilty, you would not be worthy of the regret which I am displaying, and if you are not, my friend, I beg you to forgive me, for I distress your heart by supposing it to be insensible to my suffering.

I must wait till Saturday ; I do not know whether I ought to want it to come : it is perhaps the most important day of my life. If it left me only one resource, well, you would have put the finishing touch to a hateful destiny, and I think that I should bless you for it. Yes, I should hold you dear for it, for

I can no longer hate you, I no longer want to hate you ; that horrible feeling is too alien from my mind, too violent for it ; I thought I should die of it, such convulsive shuddering did it cause in my whole body. After it I win some calm only by means of a dose of opium which throws me into a ſtate of collapse which resembles imbecility.

My friend, I shall ſoon not have physical ſtrength enough to love you ; the result of the violent ſhocks which you give my heart is always to weaken and break down my mechanism. And it would not be ſo bad if ſuffering made the way ſhorter ! But one travels ſo ſlowly when one is joſtled at every moment ! Oh ! Heavens ! how many hours there are to paſs between now and two o'clock on Saturday ! I am going to employ all the ſtrength I have to deceive its length. I have already engagements this afternoon for five or ſix things of which not one is even ſo much as indifferent to me, but I ſhall be conſtantly with people who are a little fond of me ; that will keep my courage up. To-morrow I am going to Auteuil, on Friday to Paſſy to hear the famous ſinger who ſpent laſt year here, and who, ſo they ſay, poſſeſſes ſo charming a voice and ſuch great ſtupidity. If my ſtate of mind were calm, I ſhould have been able to enjoy this pleaſure, but for a mind which ſuffers and loves does any intereſt in life remain ?

My friend, I am writing to you from the comte de Crillon's, where I have been ſettled for two days. I am here alone ; madame de Crillon is in the country, and her huſband is at Metz to do a month's ſervice cruel as can be, ſince it ſeparates him from his wife. It is vain to ſearch the whole houſe, to look in every corner of it, they have taken all away, there is no trace of happineſs left. I ſpent the night in a very hard bed, I had not yet cloſed my eyes at eight o'clock this

morning ; I felt very worn out, very sad, and said to myself : *how different are hearts though the place is the same.*

But if misery had more influence than pleasure and happiness, how I should pity them, if they found in the bed the thoughts and the emotion which have filled me in it ! My friend, could this misery reach to you, how would you get rid of it ?

You must have received all the papers which you had entrusted to M. Turgot, who has spoken to me of them with much praise and gratitude towards you. I had a longer talk with him yesterday morning, than any I had had since he became Comptroller-General ; I saw him come into my room at eleven in the morning, and we were alone until one. I repeat it, there is no man, no man at all, more virtuous and more passionately filled with the love of what is good. I shall not go into details, I will only say : it is *I* who say it, and *he* will prove it. Do not imagine that I spent the time in praising him ; no, indeed, he is worth more than any praise of mine. I told him all that I have heard you say that he ought to know ; I did not put it as well as you could have, but I felt myself inspired by your intelligence, even your critical intelligence, although I do not admire that most, for I think it often goes beyond the mark ; but never mind ! I spoke with that confident freedom which is so natural to me with people whom I esteem and love ; in a word, I was as much at my ease as I am with you. And after a thousand impertinences, I remarked that only virtue and simplicity could be at their ease without having to get used to it. And, indeed, it seemed as if there had been no interval between then and the time when he came to read me his *metrical verses.*

If I liked, I could say much to you about M. de Malesherbes, but that would be showing off too much,

and it is difficult to burſt with vanity when one is dying of sadness.

Good-bye, my friend, and not impossibly good-bye for ever: only God and you know.

Letter 144

To the same

Saturday evening, 15 *July*, 1775.

My friend, I am alive, I shall live, I shall see you again, and whatever fate awaits me, I shall ſtill have a moment's pleasure before I die. I did not say this this morning; my heart was ſtruck with terror, I waited for my sentence, I thought it would be deadly, and I was willing to undergo it; I no longer wanted to complain, I could not suffer any more, and I had decided that to-day would be the laſt day of my life, if you did not come to my help. You have come to my help, my friend, you heart has underſtood me, has answered me, and from that moment life is endurable to me.

I had an access of despair this morning; M. d'Alembert was terrified by it, and I had no longer presence of mind enough to calm him; his intereſt wrung my heart-ſtrings; it relaxed the tension of my heart, it made me burſt into tears; I could no longer speak, and he tells me that in my delirium I twice repeated: *I shall die, go away*. The words upset him completely; he wept, he wanted to go and look for my friends, and he said: "How unhappy it makes me that M. de Guibert is not here! He is the only one who could soften your woes; since he left, you are given over to your unhappiness." Oh! my friend, your name brought me back to reason; I felt that I muſt calm

myself in order to restore repose and life to that excellent man ; I forced myself to make an effort, and told him that an attack of nerves had been superimposed on my customary pain, and in fact one arm and one hand were twisted and drawn. I took a sedative ; he had sent for my doctor ; to get away from all the fuss, I gathered up all my remaining strength and reason and shut myself up in my room to wait for the postman. He came ; I saw two letters from you ; my hands were trembling so much that I could not take them or open them. Luckily for me, the first word I could read was : *my friend ;* my heart, and my lips, were pressed to the paper ; I could no longer read, I could distinguish nothing but separate words ; I read : *you give me back life ; I breathe again.* Oh! my friend, *you* were giving it *me!* I should die if you did not love me. Never, no never, have I felt so tender and so passionate an emotion.

In short I read and re-read ten, twenty, times words which brought consolation to my heart. My friend, when you draw near to me, you attach me to life ; yes, I feel it, I love you more than happiness and pleasure ; I shall live without either, and I shall love you : and when that is not enough for me, it will be time to die.

Yes, we will be virtuous, I swear it, I answer for it ; your happiness, your duty, are sacred to me ; I should loathe myself if I found in myself an impulse which might disturb them. Heavens, if I could have retained a single thought which could wound virtue, you would make me shudder ! What ! the thought of me brings back to you the idea of crime ! No, my friend, you shall have nothing with which to reproach yourself. I, and I alone, shall have been guilty, I shall be eaten up by remorse and regret ; but if you are happy, I will for ever be silent about everything which might

MARIE DE VICHY CHAMPROND, MARQUISE DU DEFFAND

1697-1780

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give you an idea of my misery. My friend, do you know passion, do you understand what strength it can give to a heart possessed by it? Well, I promise to unite with that strength all the strength which love of virtue and contempt of death can give, so that I may never injure your repose and your duty.

I have taken good counsel with myself; if you love me, I shall have a martyr's strength, but if I come to doubt you, I shall have left only so much as is needed to deliver oneself from an unendurable weight, and it will surely not fail me if the need arises; I had it this morning. So you think that there is no degree of passion higher than that which I have shown you? Ah! *I* reply that you do not know everything, that you do not see everything, and that there are no words to express the strength of a passion which feeds on tears and remorse, and sets only two things before itself: to love, or to die. There is nothing of that kind in books, my friend; and a certain evening I spent with you would seem exaggerated if one read it in Prévost, the one man in the world who has known best all the sweetness and terror of that passion.

I have not yet had my package of letters; I shall not be easy in my mind until I have it; I cannot get rid of the fear that you have made some mistake: you were in such a hurry. Well, I should be ruined if M. de Vaines were to get to know what the package contains, you would be very blameworthy, I should be miserable, but I think I should not reproach you: guess whether that would be generosity.

My friend, a thing is happening to me which would in former days have overwhelmed me: madame du Deffand has wrought a hellish treason against me. She has involved me in all that squabble between madame Necker and madame de Marchais; she has compromised me in the eyes of madame d'Anville

and it is all even more ridiculous than it is malicious ; we must have an explanation. M. d'Angivillier has his part too in this infernal piece ; the ambassador is displaying much interest in it ; M. d'Alembert is furious, while I, in the midst of it all, am as calm as innocence, and as cold as indifference. And when yesterday they tried to make me excited about it all, I kept on answering : *everything is going on well ;* and they admired my coolness in the midst of the storm.

Oh ! It was because I had a storm of another kind ready to burst over my head ; nothing in nature was important in my eyes but the arrival of the post from Bordeaux. Well, good Heavens, I would defy all the furies in Hell, when I am pleased with you. That is the advantage, the cruel advantage, of misfortune : it kills all the petty annoyances which disturb the life of society people. I feel that I shall get out of this squabble splendidly, because I am putting neither heat nor interest into it ; I only reproach myself for talking to you so long about it, but if you were here, you would learn far more : the affair has ousted M. de Guines'.

The chevalier has brought me news of you from La Bretêche. *They*[1] had had a letter from you by the last post, and mine had waited. That is not just, for assuredly, whatever her interest in getting news of you, she would not have suffered what I have suffered, if her letter instead of mine had been delayed. But why did she still think that the *Constable* would not be played ? It is inconceivable.

One day, when I want to humiliate myself thoroughly, I shall let you know of a suspicion I have dared to form against you ; but then why have you disturbed my confidence ? It would be so pleasant to believe you and in you ; it is dreadful to me to think ill of you.

You tell me that you preserve in your heart the

[1] Madame de Montsauge. [V-G.]

insults, the horrors which I said to you ; and, tell me, what will you do with them ? You know perfectly well that I have cancelled them all ; I live and I love you ; that is all that remains of my despair and my hatred. *You are going to collect your wits in order to answer me ?* There is no need, while I am so reasonable when my attacks of madness are calmed, that it is prodigality to help me with your reason and your reasonings. Still I await them with lively impatience ; how long it is from Saturday to Wednesday !

For those who are wretched, how slowly does time fly !

Good-night, my friend. I shall finish this volume one of these days, for it will not go till Tuesday. I have been ill for three days ; I was on the rack, you have cured me.

Letter 145

to the same [1]

Sunday mid-night, 16 July, 1775.

M. de Vaines has just brought me your package ; you can imagine my misery if I had had to wait till this hour for your answer. You have written to M. de Vaines, and I am very glad of it. Heavens ! To what is the man who is the chief, the sole, interest of my life attached ? To an inspectorship, to a walk, to a dull visit ! Alas ! the great trouble does not come from this, but from the fact that your happiness does not depend on me. But do you at least know on what it *does* depend ? Have you found it ? Duties, virtue, these are sacred laws, one must devote oneself to them : but is that happiness ? Can that be pleasure ?

[1] Unpublished. [V-G.]

Good-night ; my mind and my mechanism are worn out ; I need rest, while your chief need is constant movement. Oh! You have made me suffer too much; I can stand no more.

Letter 146

TO THE SAME [1]

Monday evening, 17 *July*, 1775.

The *great affair* has been brought to a close with the greatest *glory* to me. It has been unanimously decided and agreed that Mme du Deffand is the most malicious creature whom God or the devil ever created. The committee, or tribunal, before which the affair was brought consisted of madame la duchesse d'Anville, the ambassador, M. de Vaines and me, and you can well imagine that it did not go off without shouts of laughter from the ambassador; still I think he employs all the interest he is capable of feeling, in anything that concerns me. I am much obliged to him for it, but he could never distract me when I am worried by you.

Good-bye, my friend, good-bye. You hurt me ; you torture me ; you have wounded me deeply ; but I love you, and this emotion will be balm or poison, as you will. But good-bye.

Letter 147

TO THE SAME, AT BORDEAUX

Monday, 24 *July*, 1775.

My friend, I should like to seek you out and meet you everywhere, to talk to you incessantly, to see you and

[1] Unpublished. [V-G.]

listen to you all the time. I have written to you at Bordeaux, at Montauban, and again to-day at Bordeaux, and all perhaps uselessly: for if you are to be here on the 1st, you will be on the way on the 26th or 27th. All the better, you will not get my letters, but I shall see you, and I have great difficulty in imagining that this pleasure can only do me harm; you are so kind, so affectionate, so lovable that perhaps I shall only feel that.

But why did I not have news of you by the last post? Should there ever be no time to come to a sufferer's help? Oh! yes, I am suffering, deeply; my insides do their best to distract me from the troubles of my heart. I had dysentry yesterday with horrible pain; I spent the morning in my bath, and gained a little tranquility from it. My friend, come; but yet, I shall hardly see you: a wife, a mistress, a tragedy, duties: what can be left for a wretched creature who exists only for love and pain? Yes, I feel it, I am condemned to love you so long as I draw breath; when my strength is worn out by pain, I love you tenderly; and when I am lively, when my mind is full of energy, I love you passionately. My friend, my life's last breath will still be an expression of my feelings.

Good-bye; if you read this, answer me, and do not think you will arrive sooner than your letter. My friend, take care not to come to my house at a time when I have company. I leave you; I have dreadful pains. Good-bye, good-bye; I love you and, I think, not because I *have* loved you.

Letter 148

TO THE SAME

Tuesday, 1 *August*, 1775.

My friend, send me *Victoire*; I am bored to death beneath the irons of this hairdresser; perhaps curiosity will make a diversion. I have just finished *Catinat*; I had never so fully understood and appreciated it; I have no doubt the Academy will feel the value of it; its competitors may be good and yet be a long way behind it. You make me afraid for people I know; still I do not want to discourage them.

Well! my friend; so you found nothing to answer? But do at least bring me back my silly scribblings; if necessary I will give you a commentary on them this evening from that text. I shall see you this morning; perhaps you will be so kind as to come early this evening? I must own the dead do not have such days, but on the other hand they have not suffered yesterday, and they will not complain to-morrow.

Good-bye. I uttered words yesterday which make my blood cease running; my friend, I said that I wanted you to go away. It is as if I said: I should like to be dead; and so it often is with me. Was it then very embarrassing to answer me? Don't then; I know a secret to free you from embarrassment, to make myself loved, yes loved, vigorously; but one must only come to big measures as late as possible. My book, at once.

Letter 149

TO THE SAME

Saturday evening, *August*, 1775.

I am so used to suffering and to feeling only pain, that I doubt whether I should have felt keenly the pleasure

of seeing your *Eulogy* crowned by the Academy. It would have seemed only just, and I think I should have rejoiced only feebly in the flattery which your vanity might have drawn from the success. But I own that I do feel, and feel very strongly, perhaps too strongly, your mortification in being subjected to formulas invented by pedants to encourage and reward school-boys.

One *accessit* alone would have been a disgraceful platitude, but *two* I call an insulting impertinence, and I do not care in the least what modification or distinction may be made on the day of the public sitting. If Voltaire had been a competitor, and you had been given the *accessit*, it would be perfectly natural; but to be placed after M. de la Harpe, and side by side with a young man of twenty—that has outraged me to a greater extent than I can express, or than I could keep to myself; it wounds my pride, it makes me unjust, for it drives my heart to hate the man who is preferred to you.

Be more moderate if you can; it would be handsome and generous in you, and perhaps you will find in your talents and in the knowledge of your powers a reason for despising the *accessit*. The Academies of the whole universe could not bring you down from the position to which nature has raised you. I know all this, I tell myself it is so, but I feel disgust, and am so near it that my suffering is much stronger than my thoughts. . . . I need to see you and to talk over with you what you are going to do about printing; my own idea is that it should be spread broadcast before the public can know M. de la Harpe's, which will not be read until the 25th, or printed until the 28th or the 30th. This opinion is not dictated by reason, but see whether it pleases yours.

No doubt, you were lacking in morality to open my

letter, but I have no right to be severe ; but one right I shall always have, and that is to feel when you fail in friendship, and you wounded it when you did not grant me the favour for which I asked, and which I thought I might obtain. You can no longer have any curiosity about, or interest in, the expression of my affection ; it is so well known to you, and you have rejected it so cruelly at the very time when you were demanding the greatest proofs of it, that in truth I am compelled to believe that the value you seem to set upon it at the moment is no more than the result of your feelings of decency, and possibly too, a means of dulling your conscience, which tells you louder than I do that you have abused my misery by seeming to want to soften it.

You have made use of my grief, my passion, my life, to fill up a period which you wanted to use in breaking up your close intimacy with Mme de M . . . ; it is impossible for either you or me to have any illusions as to your motives. However dishonouring this truth may be, however low it may abase me, be at least virtuous enough to save me the final stage of humiliation ; I mean my becoming the object of your pity, for it is now only pity which brings you back to me, and I confess that in spite of the invincible attraction which drew me to you, that thought revolts every faculty of my mind.

What ! I was loved by M. de Mora, I was the object of the passion of the greatest, the strongest, the most virtuous of minds, and *you* would like to humiliate me ? Oh ! Leave me to my remorse, it annihilates me ; I have been guilty, I am punished, M. de Mora is avenged. What more do you want ? To crush me, overwhelm me, beneath the weight of your pity ? I declare to you that I do not feel made for such humiliation, you would hasten my death. I

cannot disentangle whether I still cling to my affection or whether I am restrained by my horror of causing grief to two people who would give their lives for me ; my death would crush them ; and I am not flattering myself, on the contrary : I should like to be able to detach them from me and drive them away. I should then be more free, I should deliver myself from the torture which is killing me, and deliver you from the tiresomeness of seeing or avoiding a person to whom you have dealt a mortal blow, but whose death agony is lasting too long.

You tell me that perhaps you will see me to-morrow *as you pass ;* yes, indeed, everything you would do for me, everything you would grant me, would be *as you passed.* That is what virtue is : it gives *as it passes ;* only affection stays, and in truth I no longer make any claim to it, and yield you *for keeps* to the one who possesses you.

I must tell you, to satisfy truth and justice, that MM Suard. Arnaud and d'Alembert have done everything possible and impossible to spare you the *accessit ;* but they were overborne by ten academicians whose opinion was supported by custom and the regulations of the Academy. They have decided that at the public sitting your excellent work should be spoken of with the highest praise ; three voted for the division of the award.

So that is that ; I do not want to speak of it again except once, to you.

Letter 150

to the same

11.0 *p.m., Monday, August,* 1775.

The intelligence is always the dupe of the heart. How true, how just, is that saying, when one has to do with the weakest, the most easily influenced of men and one

most susceptible to every changing impression. This is what my experience told me, but my heart whispered that it was untrue: it said: *he will come back;* and all that feels within me repeated: *I shall see him.*

Oh! my friend, you *do not*, indeed, *deserve* what I am suffering; you are not worthy of the struggles which go on within me; you are not worthy of the sacrifice which I made for you, not of my life only, but of my death; and you are not worthy, above all of the worry, the embarrassment, the hindrances which my leaning towards you brings into the critical situation of my life. Oh! That leaning, that fatality, will still have their say, and whatever decision I take, it will be followed by regret and repentance. Heavens, I am tired of my life, it has been too full! Nature had isolated me, I was born to obscurity and quiet, and I have been a prey to every passion; in my own person I have known every misfortune. Oh! If I had not loved M. de Mora, how much ill I should have to say of life! My friend, I meant to say only one word, and, in spite of myself, my heart pours itself out and goes in search of yours; the habit of being loved still leads me astray; I turn towards you, and *he* is not there. Oh! No! he is not there, he did not wait for me, I had scarcely time to answer; Heavens, what memories! They crush me, they fill me with misery.

Will you come to the picture-gallery to-morrow, Tuesday, at 1.15? I will not set you on your honour, by saying that you are the only one who will not be punctual. What folly to go and promise to dine with the comte de Crillon on Wednesday, rather than with madame Geoffrin!

My friend, although you run down everything that I admire and like, tell me whether you do not call this phrase very charming: some-one, when he was asking me for news of M. de Saint-Chamans, said: *you*

know how well I love him, with your heart and mine. That is better than Mme de Sevigné's phrase about her daughter's chest.

I am due six letters, counting this one; I must have six, if you want me to say four words to you to-morrow. I hasten to repeat three which you hear too often: I l . . . y . . .—but less, yes, less, I have sure proof of it.

We always love those who admire us, *etc.*

I am really witty this evening, for I am using M. de la Rochefoucauld's; yes, you like M. d'Angivillier, but you ought to tell him to make Mme de Marchais hold her tongue when she says that "the first two acts of the *Constable* are pure *machiavellianism*"; that the *Constable* is a detestable part, while *Adelaide's* is ridiculous, because at eighteen one is not a past-master on the principles of sound policy, in duty, in law, etc., etc.

Good-night, you dear, kind, modest, charming, creature. I should like to be the only one in the secret of your vanity. In exchange, you shall have my heart's. What? Don't you know it? What does anything else matter?

Letter 151

TO M. DE GUIBERT, AT VERSAILLES

Thursday morning, August, 1775.

So you do not care whether people write to you or not, since you do not tell them how? But, as I am very ingenious, though only in one respect certainly, I am instructing one of M. Turgot's valets to seek you everywhere, but above all to find you. So do not

forget to let me know how many seats there are in the box you are giving me; also you will add a line of instructions how to get there. Believe me, if you will; tell yourself that the truth is not probable, but it is none the less a fact that I saw a great deal of all your family to-day; I went up to them, spoke of their health, their talents, of everything that was within our view; in short, I venture to answer for it that you will be told that I *am very amiable*, and you will believe not a word of it.

But do you know what I am, and to what your thoughts must get accustomed? I am truly the sister or the wife of *Grandisson*. I am becoming so perfect that I am terrified at myself; I think I am like the swan, whose death-song is his most perfect. At least that is something you will say; she has died at the wrong moment, it is a great pity!

My friend, I am grieved; one of my friends is very ill, very unhappy; I spent two hours with him yesterday evening, I wept with him, and felt that I calmed and consoled him a little. Alas! it is only too true that *every mortal man has to bear his own grief*.

I shall see you when you can; it will be as you go by, on the run, and I shall be obliged to you for anything you do; I shall never complain; I shall be the sacrificial lamb. It will not ask you again whether you have had letters from Bordeaux; it will not regret that you have forgotten that letter which was left with those you received on Sunday from all and sundry. In short, the lamb will be a little silly; it will be sheared to the skin without uttering a cry, and soon people will forget that it is suffering and that it is a victim; that will be quite natural. Good-bye. Are you pleased? Are you tired to death? I change my mind; I am going to send my letter to the Chevalier who will perhaps keep it in his pocket.

So there is not yet any *Eulogy of Catinat*? I have sacrificed mine to the most excellent of women.

Letter 152

TO THE SAME

Sunday, 8 *o'clock*, *August*, 1775.

My friend, it is *I*. I need to fill your thoughts for a moment, and you would not have given it me of your own initiative. What correspondence, what crowds of people ask for you, wait for you! I want to force a way through the crowd, and I do not want to stay in it; would you leave me there, my friend? No, you know well that I am not like all the rest; I hate you, I love you, I judge you, in my own way. Your successes, your wrong-doings, your faults, your crimes—all are known to me, are appreciated by no-one so well as by me, and yet I love you less than I have loved you. I regret it sometimes; more often it distresses me that I love you too much. My friend, I want to see you to-morrow; that is what I wanted to say to you, and also that we have news of M. de Saint-Chamans, not good news, but it is better than not knowing his condition. My friend, I want to know how your finger is; I want to know if . . . guess, and answer me.

A box for M. de Lavalette. And what about the *Eulogy of Catinat*? So you do not want me to see the *Constable*? Heavens, how many pleasures you have killed! A little longer, and we shall be as happy as the dead. Amen.

Take care. Remember.

My friend, I should like you to think just once,

between midnight and seven in the morning, of the most wretched creature alive, and one who is in the depths of despair because of the man she loves.

Letter 153

TO THE SAME

Wednesday, 10 *o'clock*, *August*, 1775.

It is neither vanity nor pride which rejects your pardon ; it is the truest and tenderest affection, which assures me that I was incapable of offending you. Just consider that if, as is impossible, I came to disesteem you, I should be compelled to despise myself for ever. So count, not on your virtues, not on my justice, but on every kind of love which inspires men. If I hated you, I should still esteem you ; in short, everything forbids you ever to doubt my esteem of you ; it is the strongest of all my feelings, on it they are all founded, and it would excuse them if they could be excused.

At the time when you wounded me most, when I gave you up, I still abandoned myself to it, for of all the letters I ever wrote you, there is not one in which my misery, my wrongs, my weakness, my crime were uttered, confessed, accused, with more candour than in the letter you quote. If that is not my profession of faith as to my esteem, my confidence, my utter reliance on your honesty, dictate me another, and I will sign it with my blood. You have not seen me because the day has only twelve hours, and you had means to fill them all with interests and pleasures which are, and ought to be, dearer to you than my unhappiness. I claim nothing, I exact nothing, and I tell myself

incessantly that the source of my happiness and pleasure is lost for ever. Good-bye.

No, I will not go to the *Constable*; I am no longer able to criticise or enjoy such pleasures and I shall take the most lively interest in your success, and shall be overjoyed at it.

Letter 154

TO M. DE COMTE DE GUIBERT, RUE DE GRAMMONT

Saturday, 2 o'clock, 26 August, 1775.

A THOUSAND thanks to you, my friend; you are a dear to have taken trouble to get me that box; I only had the tickets at nine this morning, and I am afraid my sending the messenger may have been tiresome to you, but the ladies were much alarmed at not getting the box by midnight yesterday.

But, my friend, you are no longer a dear, but a very unkind and unjust creature when you say that *I like giving you pain.* Good Heavens, what a quaint pleasure that would be! If you call telling you the truth liking to give you pain, then it would be useless to love and be loved. It would be loathsome to be in intimacy as one is in society, always masked. My friend, at five, when the *Constable* begins, I should do as some prophet or other did, when he raised his arms to heaven while Joshua was fighting. Yes, my thoughts, and my heart will be all with you; after that, what does it matter where my body is? I shall be lying on a couch at Mme de Saint-Chamans'; she is still ill, and has sent all her children to the *Constable.*

My friend, I hope you will come back to-night,[1]

[1] From Versailles, where the *Constable of Bourbon* was played in the château theatre, before the King and the whole Court, 26 August, 1775. [V-G.]

whether you are covered in glory, or depressed by a mediocre success ; but, whichever it may be, swear to me not to have a piece played again, at any rate not this one, which will be known and judged, and can only lose by coming to Paris. But I do not know why I tell you all this ; I ought to be sickened of giving you my advice ; you have the goodness to listen to it ; but follow it—never.

Will you be at one of three dinners ? to-morrow at madame d'Anville's, Monday at the comte de Crillon's, Tuesday at M. de Vaines'. See whether you have the courage always to refuse yourself to my pleasure. I have not closed an eye to-night ; my stomach gives me much pain, but I am less unhappy than I was the last two days. Heavens, how sick my heart was ! I had an attack of despair which lasted sixty hours. I saw no-one the whole time, not even one whom I was very sure would have found pleasure in seeing me. My friend, I love you, but there is so much anxiety in it, and so little confidence, that indeed the feeling is almost always a great ill, while in former days I felt it always as a great pleasure.

Good-bye. If you are on the heights of glory, tell me ; and if you were not pleased, I am the one to whom you must tell it, because what is you is more me than I am myself. Good-bye.

Letter 155

TO M. DE GUIBERT, RUE DE GRAMMONT

Saturday, 11.30 *p.m.*, 26 *August*, 1775.

I say as they said in "Blue Beard": *Sister Anne, do you see no one coming?* And M. d'Alembert does not come. I want no details, but before going to bed I

want to hear these words : *it has been applauded to the skies ; it is supremely beautiful ; there was never a greater success.* When I have heard those pleasant words I shall utter with delight the words of Saint Simeon when he had seen his Saviour. Yes, it would be sweet, more than ever sweet, to sleep to-night the eternal slumber.

Heavens, how cross I am ! They offered to send me a runner and a messenger, to tell me twice over : *great success* or *moderate success.* I refused that mark of kindness this evening ; I had a petty mind, I did not want to be under so great an obligation ; in short, I was stupid and I am punished ; but I was afraid that the taking of so much trouble might make people think my interest too profound. However, I did not take it, and in truth it would have shown more passion to expose myself to it than to deprive myself of it. I judge myself accurately and I am pleased with myself in that respect, for I am not like you; I cannot admire myself and sun myself in the rays of my own virtue ; but to-day, you must do so in the rays of your glory. Heavens, what happiness, and, as the ambassador says, what pleasure in the house ! My friend, you will never have as much as I desire for you ; you will never feel it with such transport as I wish it. Ah ! here is M. d'Alembert. Good-night. . . .

Success has caused all the rules to be broken, that scene in the third act, the finest thing on the stage, has been applauded. Lekain, Lekain ! I feel pitiless ; your grief has damaged the constable, I can no more pity you, I feel only his woe. But good-bye, my friend; you will think me mad, but the chief desire of my heart is not to see you, but for you to see everyone who will make you delight in your good-fortune, that is all the people who have shared it.

The good Condorcet sends me back a note I had

written you, and I am very glad of it ; I was at a loss about it. Do not see me at present ; enjoy yourself and do not come and cast eyes on an object which you ought never to have seen. I only ask for one hour before you leave, I am quite used to good-byes.

Letter 156

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE, AT PARIS

Paris, Saturday, 7.0 p.m., 9 September, 1775.

Read, I beg you, and answer ; at mid-night I shall be no longer here.

I am leaving, and, after thinking it well over, I am leaving without seeing you. Yesterday evening taught me that the sight of me was now only a grief and a pain to you. I had expected a pleasanter result. I brought you my troubles. I came to unite them with yours. Some of mine were even not unrelated to them ; they had you as their object. It was not the offensive and servile feeling of compassion which brought me to you ; it was the most lively and tender affection. You repulsed me, you were bitter and unjust.

I hoped for news of you this morning ; I thought that after wounding me, your heart would repent and feel the need to turn towards me. This hope was not an impulse of vanity ; it was an impulse of confidence in the tenderness and goodness of your heart. I was wrong. I must give up the happiness, or at least the consolation which I hoped both to give and receive from you. You turn everything into gall and poison. Oh ! Do you suppose that I have not troubles too ?

Ah ! Every man must bear his own grief.

I have sorrows, and remorse. Everyone I have

loved, everyone I love, everyone who has loved me, is unhappy. It is probably my fate to spread misery around me. Let me live, and I shall, I expect, bring it upon the young woman. I am leaving, and I carry the deepest sadness away with me. In such a state of mind, I catch myself still constantly wishing to go and see you. But I should hardly see you, I should see you surrounded by people. The interview would perhaps be a painful shock to your heart, and certainly would be to mine.

I am leaving, I am writing to you. I delay only so as to wait for your answer. Tell me one word, and let it once more be *my friend*. The words will perhaps comfort you, and will give me new life and strength. Your heart was so withered, so dried up, yesterday evening! Mine is oppressed. Tell me that you will live, that you still want me to love you; my heart will relax, I shall have the pleasure of shedding tears, I shall go away freed from a great weight, the weight of your unhappiness, of your hostility, of your health for which I fear total destruction.

I shall write to you on my way; I shall write regularly from Metz; I shall want to see you again; I shall try to hasten it. My friend, what blessings, what consolations, you can still give me by a word! Here is the garter which you asked me for, and as you asked for it. Here is the *Constable*. I do not return them, I give you them. If I had not given you them, I should give them again. Good-bye. It is eight o'clock in the evening. I have only ordered my horses for eleven. I have time to receive a word from you.

Letter 157

TO M. DE GUIBERT

Sunday, 17 September, 1775.

Oh ! no ! I am no longer happy or unhappy enough to make gall and poison of what you say to me : you arranged it well : with one word you froze my heart, and at the same time froze everything that you imagine to be the expression of feeling. Remember the secret which escaped you : it gave me the key to a thousand things which had seemed inexplicable ; it made me retract a false judgment which I had made in ignorance. I thought I was reading the letter of a young woman of seventeen writing to a man who had been her husband for four days, and, instead of that, it is a young woman writing to a man who has been her sweetheart for two years. Hence, everything she says is no more than the natural expression of a passion long since felt, avowed and shared. The secret you let slip also explained to me the infamous note I received from Courcelles, but, while explaining it, it did not justify it, for nothing in the world can justify such an outrage ; the note contained not a word which must not revolt and shock a decent mind.

Heavens, and I could see you, listen to you, I could still talk to you ! Oh ! How low one falls when one has learned to brave the first remorse ! Yes, I need to repeat it, to tell myself so incessantly. I was loved by M. de Mora, that is by the most elevated, the strongest, soul, by the most perfect creature who ever existed ; the thought sustains my mind, gives fresh life to my heart and restores to me pride enough not to allow myself to be annihilated by your humiliations and your outrages. *I did not answer your note* at the moment of your departure ? Well, good Heavens, what could I

answer ? When I now read the expressions of your sensibility, this is what my reason declares : he says the same thing to another and perhaps puts more vigour and warmth into it ; and there is this difference between the other and me : with her he directs all the actions of life so as to prove to her that he feels all he says ; with me, on the contrary, not one of his actions, not one of his impulses, does not flatly contradict his words.

After this remark, which is so just, so cruelly accurate, tell me, what must I answer ? I appeal to your conscience ; do you think I can penetrate into it and yet keep the opinion of you and the feeling for you which you desire ? Well, I dare to assure you that if you could penetrate into mine, you would see nothing but the crime which you made me commit. I have not had a thought, an impulse, which ought not to earn me your esteem, if one can give esteem to one who sacrificed to one what ought to be dearer than honour.

But tell me, why do you practice your morality and virtue on *me* ? You are very late in thinking of it, and if you are imposing the task on yourself in expiation of the ill you have done, I warn you that you are still wide of the mark. For you to get any merit from this behaviour in which you employ indefatigable patience, courage, kindness and indulgence, such virtue, I say, would have to have some result ; it would have to comfort and console, and, I have repeated it a hundred times, you can now do nothing for me except make me suffer and loathe the moment when I gave myself to you. So lose your desire to want to make me the victim of your morality, after having made me the victim of your character and your passions. I assure you I make no claim to reproach you, I pardon you with all my heart, and what I am saying to-day is in answer to your letter. In that note on Saturday, you showed

me your alarm lest the evil influence you say you have should spread to your wife. What was I to answer to that ? That the alarm itself was enough to insure her safety ; that the sacrifice of your time, your affections and yourself, which you have made for her, must do so also. What am I to add ? That I hope so ; and that, in truth, is all one can do for a person with whom one is in no way connected.

The people who have not seen you with your wife, and do not know, as I do, the passion you have roused in her for the last two years, say that you have converted the duties of marriage into slavery ; they say that only flunkeys—and they include Court flunkeys—can submit to fixed hours ; they consider that the stroke of eleven is as harsh as the rules of a convent ; you can quite see that they are talking nonsense, for they are not yet in your secret. For me, who am in it, and am going to tell you mine . . . But no, that is enough for to-day.

I am very anxious ; the vicomte de Saint-Chamans is going from bad to worse ; no-one understands his condition, but it terrifies me. The comte de Crillon was weeping yesterday ; his wife's confinement went off well, but the baby is dying. He was not weeping for the baby, but for the grief it will be to his wife, and the torture it gives him to deceive her about its condition. So happy people have their troubles too ? Yes ; since you tell me that you have many ; but you admit that exercise will relieve them, and I believe it, as you say it. My health is worse than ever ; I have had several attacks of fever, but I have sworn not to poison myself with doctor's stuff. Good-bye. I make no claim on your affection, or your morality, or your virtue ; do I not leave you free ?

Letter 158

TO THE SAME

4.0 *a.m.*, *Saturday*, 23 *September*, 1775.

Alas! It is true then! One can survive anything! So the excess of misery becomes its remedy! Oh! Heavens! the time has come when I can say to you, when I must say to you "*I shall live without loving you*" as truthfully as I said three months ago "*Love you or die.*" My passion has suffered all the shocks, all the paroxysms of a serious illness; I have had first a continuous fever with spasms and delirium, and then the fever stopped being continuous, and changed into attacks, but such violent, such uncontrollable attacks, that the malady seemed only more acute. After keeping for a long time at this dangerous height, it diminished a little, the attacks became less frequent, and grew weaker; in the intervals there were moments of quiet which seemed like health, or at any rate made one hope for it. After a short time longer, the fever stopped entirely, and in short for some days now I think there is nothing left but the exhaustion and weakness which always follow long and severe illnesses.

I think I foresee a long convalescence ahead of me, not the kind of convalescence which M. de Saint-Lambert paints when he says:

> Oh! How the mind delights in convalescence!

No, mine will never again know that condition of enjoyment, but it will be relieved; it will no longer be actively torn in pieces, and that is quite enough: for although I am delivered from a very cruel ill, I still have an older one, one more painful, more deep-seated, more heart-rending, and that wound will never close, but it will no longer be irritated and poisoned at every

moment by grief and remorse, it will perhaps at last find some alleviation, and that is the only remedy for an incurable disease.

Such is the most faithful history and relation of my state of mind; not a word, not a detail of it, is inapplicable to my present condition. I have loved you desperately; I have felt all the stages, all the shades, of misery and passion; I have wanted to die, have thought I should die, I have been kept back by the charm which attaches to passion, even to unhappy passion. Since then, I have reflected, I have for long hesitated, I have suffered still more; in a word, I do not know whether it is you, or your behaviour, or necessity, or perhaps the excessiveness of my grief; everything, in short has brought me back to a less fatal state of mind. I have looked around me, I have found friends whom my misery and folly have not yet driven away. I have perceived that I was surrounded by attentions, kindness, marks of interest.

In the midst of so much help and so many resources, I have found a quicker and a livelier emotion; so true is it, so tender, and so pleasant, that it must at last bring calm and consolation to my mind. And can I ever hope for anything better or greater than that? After the awful storm which has battered me for three years, is not that a coming back to port? Is it not to see heaven already open?

No, do not think I am exaggerating the progress of my cure; I see myself as I am, I feel a little more calm, I believe myself to be a little more susceptible to consolation. But I distrust myself, my inclination, my weakness, and consequently from the bottom of my heart I desire you to give yourself up entirely to your tastes, your pleasures, your affections, your passions, it matters not what, so long as you are sufficiently busy, or intoxicated, never to allow yourself any impulse of

return to me which might perhaps once more lead my thoughts astray and disturb my mind. That is what I expect of you ; it is the only reward I wish to obtain as the price of so many tears, so many woes, and so much passion.

No doubt, it would have cost me less to die than to part from you ; a speedy death would have suited my character and my passion, but the torture you have inflicted on my mind has exhausted its strength, and all its energy is lost ; and besides, I have seen myself beloved, and that softens one's heart. How can one leave life when people want to keep one alive through the tenderest affection ? I ought to have died at the moment when I lost one who loved me and whom I loved more than all the world ? This is the only reproach I will allow myself to make you : why did you keep me alive ? Was it in order to condemn me to a lingering death more cruel than that to which I was hurrying ? Would to God I could efface from my memory and wipe out of my life these last years which have just passed ! Those which went before them will ever be the charm and the torment of my heart.

Ah ! Six years of heavenly joy and happiness ought to make one think life a great enough boon for one to thank the gods for it, even when one is in the depth of despair ! If I could once more find repose, if my mind could settle to repose, perhaps the few days of life which remain to me might still be endurable. I am going to try and draw consolation from a thing which would give pleasure and happiness to another ; I will love from gratitude one who ought to be better loved, if I responded to the warmth and vivacity of the friendship which is shown me.

For the last three months I have to reproach myself with having repulsed harshly, indecently, the expression of the most lively interest which is the result of the

truest affection, an affection of which, despite myself, I have received unequivocal proofs; and you know whether I should be difficult in the matter of proofs! I astonish you, no doubt; you think that I am dreaming; every word I say seems to you to be an offence against truth and probability: well, this will prove to you a fact which you may have already perceived, though perhaps never in such extraordinary circumstances: *truth may sometimes not be probable.*

Alas! It seems as surprising to me as it does to you; I am amazed that there is still someone in the world who can set all his hopes of pleasure and happiness upon the most miserable creature in the world, the one most fitted to drive away all interest. Has the extreme of misery an attraction, then, for certain minds? Yes, I can see it, people do need to pity, to interest themselves, to rouse and busy themselves, and when they come near me, they share and take on that disposition without my wishing it. For a long time I have noticed that the man never left me without emotion, and it has been conclusively proved to me that for him misfortune, sickness and old age are in me a good substitute for grace, youth and charm. Do you think it is possible for me to be vain because I have such an attraction for an honourable and deep-feeling man? No, I am not vain, I am too unhappy, too profoundly unhappy to be touched by the pleasures and follies of vanity. I had never before talked to you about all this; I was afraid that the putting it into words would give it more substance; I was unwilling even to let my thought dwell on it. In the first days of my despair, when you had given sentence against my repose and my life, I rejected with horror every one who wanted to distract my attention from you: I preferred to die rather than part from you: I hoped I might make myself calm about the sentence you had just

pronounced against me ; I thought your presence would do me good, that you would say what I needed to hear, that you would help me to endure the blow which you had struck me.

I found nothing of the kind, and without making any claim to grumble, or reproach you, I convinced myself, absolutely, that your marriage must for ever break our relationship, that it could now produce nothing but annoyance and torture, that I should become a nuisance to you, perhaps hateful to you, and that you would be forced, like me, to have recourse to the painful exercise of virtue ; and since fortunately no duty binds us together, it would be dreadful to impose such restraint upon ourselves. At the first moment when you plunged the dagger into my heart I thought I could no longer live without hating you : that horrible impulse could not last long in a heart full of passion and tenderness ; I have since experienced all the anguish, all the agitation, of grief, and now here I am at last in a state which I believe to be calm, though it may perhaps be only the weakness of exhaustion. But at least I want never again in the future to have to reproach myself for what I may suffer : that is, I think, one great evil the less.

Up till now I have justified the saying of La Rochefoucauld that *the intelligence of most women serves rather to strengthen their folly than their reason.* How true that is ! I die of confusion when I remember what I had dared to hope for. Yes, I was exalted enough, or rather led far enough astray, not to think it impossible that I might be your chief object, and my folly gave me reasons which were plausible enough to satisfy my passion. Consider, I beg you, into what depths of illusion I was led ! Yet I swear to you that it was not pride that led me astray ; on the contrary, pride has helped me to return to truth and reason ;

it judges me to-day with more severity than you could show; everything that you refuse me, everything that you have not been for me, seems no more than a necessary result of the justness of your taste and of your justice.

Do not, however, think that I consider you to have been just, kind, honourable, in your conduct towards me; it is my reason, and only my reason, which gives sentence to-day, and seeing me so weak, so guilty, so foolish as I have been, still that does not justify all the harm you have done me, but it makes me forgive you with all my heart. Perhaps one is never consoled for great humiliations, but I want to hope that time will efface the impression of them. I wish that your marriage may make you as happy as it has made me unhappy; believe me, when the wish is very sincere, generosity and goodness could not be carried further. I have had no answer to a letter which I wrote to you a week ago; I do not complain, I only tell you the fact, because I should be very glad for it not to be lost. Before you leave for the country, I beg you to send me back the three letters which I wrote to you at Metz; if, lastly, you had received the Bordeaux letter, you would be good enough to include it.

I have not had your sweet-meats, that is why I have not thanked you. Only hatred can change honey into poison, and there is no hatred in me. If ever we talk again of things which it will be so good to forget, I will explain to you the last act of folly which I committed when I wrote to you on Thursday. I will tell what kind of torture it was that drove me to that excessive tenderness and weakness. In truth, I am being driven mad; I no longer know which makes me the more wretched; the ill you do me, or the good people would like to do me. I am dying of it; I should need to flee to a desert to rest.

How I pity you for the appalling length of this letter! But I am so ill, so worn out, that I have not had the strength to put any order into it, to cut out what is useless. I feel it, long pain tires one's mind and wears out one's head; but if I have allowed myself this once to talk at such length, it will never happen again: there are subjects to which one cannot return.

If you were in Paris, I should have taken good care not to address this volume to you; you would not have read it. It has been proved to me that you did not read my letters, and it was perfectly natural: they were addressed to you in a place where you had to see and listen to people who had a very different interest for you from any that I or my letters could rouse; so I promise never again to arrive at so ill-chosen a time. Good-bye, my friend. This is the last time that I shall allow myself that name: forget that it was my heart that uttered it. Forget me! Forget all I have suffered! Let me believe that it is a happiness to be loved; let me believe that gratitude will be enough for my heart! In a word, leave me, I am no longer yours. Good-bye, good-bye.

Letter 159

to mlle de lespinasse

Metz, Tuesday morning, September, 1775.

I must certainly expect not to hear news of you. I am even writing without any hope that you will answer; but I shall not grow tired; I shall pursue you with my affection, even were you to tell me that it is a torture to you. As it is for my sake, and not yours, that I love you, you have no right to make me give it up.

Yet how well you do all you can to hurt me! What

a note you sent me on Saturday evening! Was it even so much as an answer to mine? You seemed not to have read it. You seemed to think that my regrets were not concerned with you, that they must be relieved since *people* share them. I repeat, it was your unhappiness that weighed upon my mind. I had other reasons for worry, but you were the one I felt most grievously. My thoughts can no longer turn to you without trembling; what is that other misery which overwhelms you and which you persist in concealing from me? What is this state of grief, disquiet, doubt and uncertainty which prevents you from breathing? You add: I am suffering much, and I cause . . . What do those dots mean? *Suffering*, no doubt. And who is suffering at your hands? Oh! Everyone who loves you, apparently. I am, certainly, for you make everyone who is attached to you feed on bitterness. Your mind is now so active and burning, now so cold and dried up, always so full of grief and so difficult to manage, that one really does not know how to deal with it.

In truth, I am the only person in the world who is capable of holding my ground with it. If all your friends saw you as close as I, I should be left alone to love you. But I have not only the gentleness of the lamb, I have the warmth, the activity, the pliancy, the tireless compassion of affection. You have said nothing either about the ring or about the *Constable*. It seems that they are presents which you reject. I arrived here yesterday evening. I found the chevalier d'Aguesseau here. It is a pleasure for me, but he cannot console my mind; he does not know its secrets. To whom can I reveal them, good Heavens? An exceptional mind would be needed to believe them and appreciate them. You alone could be my confidant if you did not play a bigger part in my heart.

They are very busy here with drill and tactical exercises which are going to occupy me but not fill my thoughts. It is six o'clock and I am fully dressed ; I am waiting for the chevalier d'Aguesseau who is coming to fetch me. This kind of life will do me good ; it will sometimes give rest to my mind, which was too active and too tired in Paris ; it witnessed too much suffering. Do me the kindness to give me an answer about the pension which M. de Condorcet promised me to have found for a young man who has been recommended to my notice. Let me know, too, whether you can help me at all with M. de Malesherbes in a request which belongs to his department, and in which I am deeply interested. It is not, however, a personal matter.

You are going to say that I am interested in many things, in everything, or rather, in nothing ; it is because I am good at heart ; because I want above all things to become so : I want to fill the remainder of my life with good actions and good will. Perhaps in so doing I shall wipe out the ill I have done. Alas ! I wipe it out in another fashion ; I do no harm without suffering for it.

Good-bye, my friend, I call you once more by the name which you perhaps detest. I bought you some sugared almonds at Verdun ; but I wager you will find them bitter :

All his benefits are poisons.

Letter 160

to the comte de guibert

Sunday evening, 24 September, 1775.

I do not want to make your reckoning false ; you would perhaps imagine that I was doing it from annoyance, or

deliberately, or perhaps from caprice, and nothing could excuse that. Reason is impartial and just, and it is fully time that I kept to it. No, if you please, you will never give me any explanation of facts which God Himself could not alter ; we must judge them by their results.

You are married ; you have loved, you love or will love a person who, by the vivacity and strength of her passion, has for long attracted you ; that is quite in order, quite natural, it is your duty, and consequently one would have to be at once stupid, foolish and dishonourable, to allow of any conditions or restrictions which would disturb your happiness, and prolong my torture. Everything has been said once and for all, and, believe me, let us spare the details : when once the thread of truth has been broken, one must not try to join it again, it is never a success. Always, whatever the circumstances, I have told the truth ; so there could be no confusion or embarrassment for me. All my life I have never had to reproach myself with deceiving anyone in the world ; I have no doubt been very guilty, but I can say that truth has always been sacred to me, and, I repeat, you would be even happier than you are, if you had been faithful to the same principles.

Situations in a romance, or rather which are not to be found in a romance, could make no difference to the state of misery and despair in which my life has been spent since I have known you. No doubt the romance which you have begun will be full of pleasure, happiness and everything that can make you joyful ; I desire it with all my heart. For my part, I ought to appear only in the romances of *Prévost* ; do you think I ought to be excluded from the *Astrée* ? Good-bye. I have written you a volume ; you must need a rest from me.

M. de Saint-Chamans is much better the last two days ; he thanks you a thousand times. M. d'Alembert was much touched by your remembering him. The comte de Crillon is back in heaven : the mother and child are extraordinarily well. Madame de Châtillon has just come, and is leaving my room. I hope M. d'Anlezi will come back in a few days. I am no longer feverish.

Letter 161

to the same

Tuesday, mid-day, September, 1775.

This is like lunacy, and yet it is most reasonable reason, for it is to ensure my pleasure. I have just remembered that I asked you to send your answer and return my letters under cover to M. de Vaines.

My friend, only do half of this ; send back my letters under his address, and, in God's name, do not forget a double envelope ; but address your answer direct to me, and it must be an answer, so it must be a very long one. I shall not get it until Saturday the 15th, and I have just remembered that M. de Vaines is at Versailles on Saturday ; this would delay a thing which I shall await with an impatience that makes me feverish. My friend, you understand clearly, so do not do anything silly : your letter, to me ; mine—*all* mine—to M. de Vaines. I am afraid the postman has gone ; I am going to address my letter to a friend of mine at the post office.

Letter 162

TO THE SAME

Friday, 4 *o'clock*, 6 *October*, 1775.

My friend, I have not done what you wanted, I ask your pardon, but it is beyond my strength to address a letter to you in the place in which you are. Still I am not so unjust as to wish that you were not there, and even finding pleasure and interest there; I am inconsistent, weak and unhappy, that is all. Put up with me as I am, and I will love you to distraction as you are.

Heavens, how kind it was of you to write to me that line as you left. It revived my stricken heart for a moment. Oh, my friend, how difficult life is for me! Your presence alone can make me endure the feeling of the loss I have suffered; everything else warns me that there is no remedy, as there is no consolation, for my misery; all my friends, all their attentions, make me feel that nothing henceforward can reach my heart. It was M. de Mora, it was my feelings for him, that made everything alive for me. Except for you and my affection for you, everything has been extinguished with him; the whole of nature seems dead to me, I would not bring it back to life, but I would I were annihilated. What is one to do with an existence so painful and so languishing?

My friend, you will help me to endure it, and that will for some time be enough for your kindness and goodheartedness. You will say: I am consoling, softening, grief; I am wiping away the tears of one who clings to life solely through me. But, my friend, this virtuous emotion could not by itself entirely satisfy your heart: its ardour, warmth and activity will not be content with softening my ills; you will want—and

reasonably so—to make me happy and give me pleasure, and that will be impossible, and soon you will grow cold and desert me. I feel, I foresee, this future, and it seems quite close to me : why wait for it ? Would it not be pleasant and easy to forestall it ? Ah ! Let me finish dying ! Do not try to warm, to rekindle, a heart burnt up by pleasure and pain. To me, you are so lovable, you so deserve to be loved, that you would make me regret every moment the strength and the warmth which I have lost. No, it is not I whom you must love ; you would feel too often that you were doing me a favour, and that would spoil your heart and your pleasure. You should rule in a mind full of life and youth, of warmth and passion ; mine can never again reach such heights. It is inspired only by tenderness and sensibility ; you are its object, not a moment passes when I do not find pleasure in giving you proofs of it, but since there are better and greater things than that, you must lay claim to them and abandon me.

My friend, the chevalier de Chastellux has determined to *turn my head ;* he came again yesterday to spend the evening with me. He arrived from Choisy at 11.0, and came straight to my house ; he found me with the good Condorcet and M. d'Anlezi. I was almost dead when he came in, and was not more alive all the time he was with me. He is good-hearted, even more so than he is vain, for he asked me several times whether I was in pain ; he compared my condition with what it was the day before, and did not suspect that the charm which sustained and inspired me then had evaporated. It was acting somewhere else, no doubt, and I did not find the thought consoling.

I went to bed very late ; I did not sleep, and, at 6.0, I took some opium, but a pretty small dose, just to lessen the need I feel to take a hundred grains of it.

In fact, it did take away the worst pangs of pain ; I am suffering, but at the same time I feel that I love you. I think that I shall see you on Sunday morning, that perhaps I shall have news of you to-morrow ; if it were not so, I should get off by taking two more grains, and should wait for you uncomplainingly and without loving you less. My friend, I have a feeling of kindliness, of *moderation*, which terrifies me ; this latter virtue seems to me created for the inhabitants of Purgatory, and I am afraid of being condemned to go there. I have only experienced the climate of Hell on one side, of Heaven on the other ; there is no way I know of acclimatising my mind to any other temperature. Which means that when one has touched the last extremes of misery and happiness, there is only one thing left : to die. And that, indeed, is what I long for ; I should have reached it already, if you had not turned me aside from it.

Good-bye ; I love you with all my heart, but that is not enough, it is nothing by the side of what you deserve, and what you ought to inspire. If I have news of you, I shall thank you, and then send off my letter so that you may find it on your arrival.

M. d'Anlezi is going to dine at Auteuil on Tuesday ; he will be delighted to take you with him. I have not told you that I had answered the stupidest, the dullest, of notes ; but it hardly matters. It is at any rate indulgent, and my self-love can no longer be very difficult to satisfy. Good-bye, then.

Saturday, 7 October, after the post.

No, you are not mistaken ; you know my feelings, you see into my heart, you know what it feels for you, you have seen its struggles, its remorse, you see its grief. I live ; after that, need I say that I love you, that I am waiting for you, that all the energy I have

left is spent on longing for you, on fearing your absence, on thinking that I shall not be able to endure it ? And if my thoughts can dwell upon it with a little calmness, it is when I tell myself that I shall perhaps find again the courage of which your presence deprives me, for how can one find ſtrength to die when one sees the person whom one loves !

My friend, your letter is as amiable as yourself, it is full of life and intereſt ; I needed them. Oh ! Heavens ! How I suffered laſt night. I can ſtand no more, but I love you. Bring me back my letter, and forgive me ; one cannot be cured of fear.

Letter 163

TO M. DE GUIBERT, AT FONTAINEBLEAU

Sunday evening, 15 *October*, 1775.

One to the country, *to Ousson.*

My friend, muſt we then be two ? You do not know how to say anything, you have nothing to say to me, when I am silent. Oh ! Heavens ! If there was no-one behind you, if no-one read over your shoulder, if letters were not thrown under people's feet, without your putting them there, I would write you volumes, I would not wait for you, I should pour out my heart, I should spend my life in complaining, in forgiving you, in loving you. But how can I ? Whence shall I win again the ſtrength which you take from me ? The blow which you have ſtruck me has reached my heart, and my body is giving way, I feel it. I do not want either to alarm, or to intereſt you, but I feel that I am dying of it ; there is now no source of help left me in the world, for even supposing the impossible, that you were to become free again, and were to me

what I had longed for, it would be too late ; the roots of life are attacked, and I perceive it without regret and without terror. My friend, you have prevented me from killing myself, and you are causing my death ! How inconsistent ! But I forgive you ; in a little while it will be all the same. Heavens, I do not want to reproach you ; if you saw into my heart, it is far from wanting to hurt you, or to bring a moment's bitterness into your life !

No, though I am in the depths of misery, though I feel that I am a victim because I have loved, though I feel as blameworthy as I am unhappy, I find in my heart only the most lively desire for your happiness ; your interests are still first in the life which is slipping from me. Good-bye, my friend ; you see, I am not cross ; but there are places, there are things which leave me nothing but grief. Write to me ; tell me what you are doing, tell me if you are pleased ; if the thing which interests you has turned out as you wished. In short, my friend, find, if you can, a little sweetness in dropping a few moments of pleasure into a heart which is deeply wounded and yet entirely yours.

I shall write to you every evening, and when you leave Fontainebleau, you will send me back all my letters. Oh ! Do not call this distrust ; it is rather virtue, for it is taking care of your repose.

Letter 164

TO THE SAME

4 *o'clock*, *Monday*, 16 *October*, 1775.

My friend, I am writing to you this morning, because I am afraid of not being able to do so this evening. Yesterday, I had quite a bad attack of fever, and

to-night, at 2.0, I thought I should die of a fit of coughing followed by a feeling of suffocation which really brought me to grips with death. My maid's terror caused me to think that death must indeed be very alarming ; her face was quite changed, and when I could speak, I asked her the reason of her distress : she could say nothing but " I thought you were going to die " ; for she had courage enough left to see me in pain. I am still in bed ; there is nothing left but a slight feeling of oppression in addition to my usual pains.

Are you not at Montigny, or are you not going there ? Did not Mme de Boufflers arrange to meet you there ? She left to-day with the abbé Morellet, and is coming back on Thursday. The Archbishop of Toulouse is to arrive there this evening. Someone who knows Mme de Boufflers well said to me yesterday : " She makes herself a victim of a mania for consideration, and, by always running after it, she loses it. I wager," said he, " she will do her utmost to be, not at the King's dinner, like Candide at Venice, but at the ministers' dinner, at Montigny." He said it as if it was a conjecture, and this morning I had two lines from him : " Will you believe me now about people whom I know ? You laughed at me yesterday ; well, she left this morning, and is going to plunge into the midst of people who are barely her acquaintances. Vanity of vanities ! "

My friend, if it was to go and find you there, she did well ; she must have a particular affection for the man to whom she could make herself for once speak the truth ; it must be a great relief to her to doff her mask. How can people live in such a perpetual pose ? Is vanity, then, the strongest force in nature ?

My friend, tell me now who you think will be war minister ? They say it will be the Baron de Breteuil who has spent his life on foreign affairs : it is just like

the *Avare*. Have you already read a great deal in preparation for your *magnum opus* ? You have had only a week, but you do everything so quickly that perhaps seven days have sufficed you to do what another would not do in as many months.

Have you seen M. Turgot ? Now is the time when the work you did for him may be very useful to him. You will see him at Montigny ; I should like you to talk to him ; you would perceive that he is far superior to the people who judge him with prejudice and passion, and whose opinion you follow.

Some days ago you told me, no doubt with the view of transporting me to the seventh heaven of delight : " It is from this place that I tell you that I love you, from the place where I am loved, where I am busy, calm, etc." Oh ! my friend, it's an easy matter to be loved when one is young, when one has an agreeable face, when one's behaviour and one's attentions proclaim a man who wishes to please, and above all when all the actions of one's life declare that one is not strongly attached to anything ! How could you fail to be loved ? Fools and idiots are that. M. de Bouzol is adored by his wife who is young, pretty and agreeable, and what amazes me is that it has not turned his head ; he does not imagine, like the comte de Crillon, that he would have been chosen ; he remembers that his marriage was made by twenty-five thousand francs a year. But do you know a thing that is striking, that is unusual, extraordinary, almost miraculous—although there are some examples of it, such as Diane de Poitiers, madame de Maintenon, mademoiselle Clairon : it is to be able to say, " I am loved," when one is old, sad, ill, crushed by misfortune ; and chiefly when one can say : I am loved by an honourable and amiable man who has reached the time of life when one is most fastidious and most difficult to please, and

yet has the right to claim anything and to deserve to be preferred.

That, my friend, is worth the trouble of saying, for it is a miracle. But to be vain of being loved by one's wife, when one is charming, and when one can, from morning to evening and evening to morning, persuade her and prove to her that one is passionately in love . . .! Oh! Fie! That is so ordinary! The comte de Crillon says the same thing and takes the same pleasure in it; but in truth I do not think that there anyone is tempted to make a third in the party, or is so abandoned as to lay claim to the overplus of this great passion.

Good-bye, my friend. I do not know why I have talked about all this. If I am feverish, still I am not sufficiently so to be delirious; but it gives me pleasure to chatter to you, and I say everything that comes into my head. So write to me; I need to be consoled and helped; my mind and my body are in a deplorable; condition. My friend, you are fourteen leagues away it is a very long distance, and it would be so near, if . . . But good-bye.

Letter 155

to the same

Tuesday, 4 o'clock, 17 October, 1775.

I was waiting for the post; I wanted a letter from you, but you did not want me to have one. I saw the Fontainebleau post-mark on a letter, and breathed more freely, but then I saw my mistake. Heavens! How mad, and unjust I am, but above all how wretched I am! My friend, if I was able not to love you, if I was able to love one whom I do not love, perhaps the

time that is left to me to live would not be devoted to a torture which racks my body and my soul.

Still, I am in less pain to-day ; I have taken a large dose of ipecacuanha, which at first tired me to death, but I think it has let the air into my lungs ; yesterday I could not breathe. My friend, I do not know why I talk to you about my health ; when I see you, I never talk of it, but then I do not feel any pain. How could one help loving a little a creature to whom one does so much good, and, above all, to whom one does so much harm ? Oh ! why does one love ? Or why does one not love ? Who are the fools, or the souls of ice, who have ever been able to explain it ?

The chevalier de Chastellux would not fail to tell us the secret, and he will always be far more pleased at having made a syllogism than at feeling an emotion. They tell me he had a painful one, the other day, at the representation of a play by M. de Lavalette, which was frantically applauded, and which Mesdames de Gramont and de Beauvau never tired of praising. The chevalier was astounded, and could never conceal his annoyance. Madame de Gléon followed his example, and the two were thoroughly unpopular in their circle. I am telling you the Church's secret, not the comedy's. To restore their self-esteem a little, *Roméo et Juliette* is being played to-day, followed by *Agathe* ; Mme de Beauveau has put off her departure in order to be present at the triumph and to cause it ; but I die of fear lest *Roméo* should kill the success of *Agathe*. Do you know this *Roméo*, my friend ? It is not bad, it is not mediocre, it is not even tiresome, but it is a monstrosity, a thing to flee from. I have heard the comtesse de Boufflers say that it is as fine as Corneille, and better than the English play. I was with her at the first night, but such very different feelings inspired me that I wanted to faint so as to be

carried out of the theatre. No doubt I was the one who was wrong, but it is an impossibility for me to be cool and compose an opinion contrary to my feelings.

I am sending this letter to M. de Vaines; I have no doubt you are with him at Montigny. My friend, will the charm of the place, the people, the events, have left you liberty to think that you could write to me by Nangis? You reached Fontainebleau on Sunday; if you had written to me on Monday morning, I should have had news of you to-day; but you have wanted to see all at once the Queen, M. de Duras, the ministers, your friends, your acquaintances, people who are neither; in short, one must see, hear, know, everything. One has business, one does it ill, but no matter! One has seen a lot, been about a lot, and at the end of the day, one is just where one was before; but one has satisfied the squirrels' charming activity, and one tells oneself that in ten years one will know one's own mind, and arrange one's business better: and one is mistaken, I assure you.

Heavens, how delightful it was to love and to live for someone who had known, judged, valued, everything, and had ended, like the sage, by finding that all is but vanity! Love was enough for his heart and his mind; oh! how noble, how great, was that mind! Never have I seen such passion allied with such virtue. My friend, I would give the remainder of my life for you to have known him.

I am going to give you cause for more running about: I beg you to hunt among the book-sellers for a "*Dialogue between a bishop and a parish priest, on the marriage of protestants.*" They say it is admirable; read it, and send it me by M de Vaines; it is not to be had here. And please, do not enclose a letter with the pamphlet, for it would not be sealed. Do you know your worst quality? It is your indifference to all the

inconveniences and even the misfortunes which are inseparable from your way of living. You can say what you like, but this carelessness is a sign of bad morality. Good-bye, my friend, I love you, but I am feeling very stupid, and I think it is a most distasteful thing to be loved by a fool: what do you think? I believe that if I read *Clarissa* this evening, I should find neither love nor passion in it. Heavens, can one fall lower?

I do not like Fontainebleau, can it be because you are there? My friend, if you had the choice, would you have liked me to be at Montigny even more than madame la comtesse de Boufflers? To be in the country with the person one loves best in the world is a happiness I have never experienced.

Letter 166

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Montigny[1], *Wednesday evening*, 18 *October*, 1775.

I received this morning, after writing to you my friend, the two letters numbered 2 and 3 which you,

[1] The Court was, at this time, at Fontainebleau, the Ministry of War was vacant and the choice of a new minister in place of the maréchal du Muy preoccupied men's minds, and particularly the army. The ministers in power went to spend some days at the château of Montigny, near Fontainebleau, the residence of M. de Trudaine, to consult before submitting their ideas on the subject to the King. M. de Guibert, like so many other officers who were interested in this important appointment, had gone to Montigny, as we see here. As we know, the new minister was the comte de Saint-Germain, an old companion in arms of the comte de Guibert *père*, and like him a lieutenant-general: they had served in the Seven Years' War together. M. de Saint-Germain also had an affection for and treated as his son, the young Guibert, whom he had had under his orders in the same campaign, when Guibert still almost a child (he was not fifteen) served on the staff of the maréchal de Broglie, his father, the lieutenant-general, being also on it. [V-G.]

addressed to me under cover to M. d'Aguesseau. A thousand thanks for them. To write to me with such punctuality, suffering as you are! You are carried away, you yield to the needs of your heart; that is what makes your letters even more dear to me.

It is from affection, not from gratitude, that I love to pay my debt to you. But hardly have I given myself up to the pleasure of having news of you than I am overwhelmed by renewed bitterness and grief. The news is dreadful; it tells me of the ever more terrible collapse of your health, and in what terms! It seems as if you chose them deliberately: "*My body is giving way; I feel it; I do not want either to alarm or to interest you, but I feel that I am dying.*" And again: "*It would be too late; the roots of life are attacked; I perceive it without regret and without terror.*"

Oh! Would to God that you had chosen the words to torment me! Would to God they were the exaggerated expression of your imagination exalted by misery and pain! I should be more easy then; I should tell myself "there are still remedies, my friendship will have the power to console and comfort her." But if indeed you are dying, if the rest of your life is to be no more than a slow and painful agony—how horrible! Fever every evening; sleepless nights; the fatal lethargy which opium gives you, and which is followed the next day by more terrible convulsions; the sense of suffocation which you felt on the night of Sunday to Monday, when you thought you were at grips with death; your maid's terror, her change of countenance which makes me imagine the awful change in yours: such are the facts with which you fill my thoughts.

But all the same, do not restrain yourself; do not impose upon yourself the even more dreadful torture of saying nothing about your ills to the one person in

the world who has the right to know their full extent. Pour into my heart, drop by drop, the poison which is eating up yours; you will never make me tired of loving you or answering you. But, beyond that, what do you demand of me, what can I do for you?

Take care; towards me you are always on the verge of cruelty and injustice. Egoism blinds you, passion leads you astray; you often behave harshly, unfairly, towards me. I too have my burdens, my remorse, my struggles; but I have the generosity to tell you nothing of them, and at the first cry you utter towards me, at the first idea of what you are enduring and the pain of which you give me a glimpse, I forget myself and listen only to the longing of my heart.

Let us try for a moment to talk of things less sad; but how empty and cold it will all be in comparison! I came to dine here yesterday; I am spending the night here, and shall leave again to-morrow. No, it was not the *dinner at Venice*, for these ministers are in power, and I who would travel ten leagues to dine with ministers in disgrace, always regret the distance I have to come to meet those who are in office. Their power weighs heavy on me; it seems to me at once that they hold it at my expense, that they have usurped it from me. The idea comes into my head that they do nothing good, nothing big, with it, while I . . .

My friend, this impulse which I can entrust to no heart but yours, is not an impulse of ambition; it is not even an impulse of pride—finish what you are going to say, Lucifer—it is the feeling of my own strength. These people are men of intelligence, and that is all. They have no love of fame; they have only a passive love of what is good; they grope their way, they make composition with abuses; in short, I suspect them of having taken a liking for their positions. M. Turgot is a man of systems, rather than

of plans. He accepts all ideas, but he does not co-ordinate them, he carries out nothing. His intelligence is like cut glass, while the genius of a great minister resembles a burning glass whose focus gathers up thousands of rays and projects them suddenly in a mass of fire upon the objects on which it is directed.

Besides, it was not by his words that I judged him to-day, for he was wrapt in silence and in worries. Add to this, that he had his pigtail tied up and was in a country suit with gold facings. He does not look his best in that attire ; he had a vulgar air, almost that of a stock-broker. Is not that the very worst appearance a Comptroller-General can have ?

M. de Vaines, with whom I had a long talk, told me that M. Turgot was at the moment reading the memoirs I gave him, and was very pleased with them, but foresaw, feared, difficulties. Why then does he not tell me about them ? I should smooth over these so-called difficulties, I should inspire him, rouse him, if he can be roused. Is it believeable that he has not yet said a word about it to me ? For I do not count as anything a short note of thanks he sent at the time. He is coldly polite towards me ; he looks at me as if he wanted to speak to me, but never delivers himself. Can he have judged that I have judged him ?

My friend, I am hurting you ; you are going to say that I talk with prejudice, even with bitterness. One thing does prejudice me against him, I do not deny it : his complete refusal to oblige his friends. What is the public to expect of a man who shows his affection in such a way ? Great men—and I only call " great," men who have energy—love, and hate ; they have no doubt, weaknesses, passions ; they sometimes act on the spur of the moment and immoderately ; they pile benefits upon their friends ; but the mass of humanity whom they make happy forgives them the debts which

they pay to nature. Believe me, your passionless, cold, people, your so-called virtuous people, are not cut out to rule.

Consider what the marshal de Muy was like; but his death has reconciled me to his life. As for M. de Malesherbes, he has been so far very ready to talk, very friendly, and above all has shown a simplicity, a singlemindedness, and a freedom from standing on his dignity and from all appearance of being too busy, which delight everyone. He is like a decent *bourgeois* in the country, but his middle-class-ness is only on the outside, in his dress. His conversation takes on every hue, it is by turns playful, serious, lofty, often instructive. Heavens, how I should like to cultivate his acquaintance, how closely I shall follow him when he is no longer a minister. I wager it is the people who surround him who make him love his position, while he himself is, at bottom, bored by it. He sometimes seems to let it slip out that he has been made a doctor in his own despite.

One word more about the ministers, to finish with them for good. The War Office will not go to the baron de Breteuil. He had sent a courier who has left again; that gave rise to the rumour which got about. The ambassador from Naples, who arrived to enliven our supper, says he is sure it will not be a civilian, but an old general. M. de Vaux's name is often mentioned. Is it not clever of me to have quarrelled with him? I should have been minister. For my part, I think it will be M. de Castries. He has a tremendous following. M. de Schomburg must be very disturbed by it. The archbishop of Toulouse is here. I had been alarmed by tales about his health; but I was pleased with his looks: he is cheerful, which is still a proof. There, as I think, is an exceptional man, born to rule; by what fatality will he not be made to fill his

vocation ? The comte de Broglie and he—these are the only two men in the kingdom whom I know to be capable.

I spent two hours this evening with madame de Boufflers ; she is always opposite me busily taking off her mask and putting it on again. I said a lot to her about the misery of people who were attacked by the disease of consideration, and I made her say much ill of herself. Good-bye, my friend. This is too long a letter for your eyes. Mine are closing. I am going to bed. I shall come back to-morrow to dine at Fontainebleau ; I shall find news of you there. I have not yet begun any of my own affairs, except the one which had to do with M. de Malesherbes : I have spoken to him about it. Good-bye again. I love you and I should much like the word to relieve your pain I utter it from the bottom of my heart.

Letter 167

TO M. DE GUIBERT

Wednesday evening, 18 *October*, 1775.
and the 4th to Fontainebleau.

Here I am at last at Fontainebleau ; I have been waiting there for you since Sunday the 15th. I have written to you there every day : two letters to M. d'Aguesseau's, and one to M. de Vaines, at Montigny, where I thought you would be. My friend, if only to put them in the fire, claim those letters, I beg you. Tell me, if you know it, the day on which you expect to leave so that I may make arrangements not to be at Fontainebleau when you have left ; I am quite pleased to follow you, but not to be left behind, because you

have so many other interests that you hardly think of looking back.

You write very short letters, my friend, but you are very kind: if you cannot take away from me the feeling of my misery, you often deprive me of the strength to complain of it. Heavens, how delightful it would have been to owe to you the consolation of my life, and to know pleasure through no one but you! But you have ruined everything, even hope. Alas I did not deserve to be treated carefully; I was already so unhappy when you met me. You have done too much; I did not deserve the interest you have shown in me. It has led me wrong, I have hurled myself into an abyss, you led me to it, you pushed me over it; and there is no way now of bringing me help; I must endure my awful fate, I must suffer, love you, and die soon.

Oh! no, my friend, I do not want any more to weigh upon your mind; I do not want to tire it any more; it is cowardly and cruel to make others share woes for which there is no longer any remedy; the necessity of suffering will make me generous, my friend, your happiness and your tranquility shall be my sole interest, if I can manage it; but I dare not answer for myself; the long-drawn-out pain makes one so weak. And besides when one has absolutely given up the idea of happiness for oneself, one often thinks that restraint would be stupidity or madness. In short, I shall do the best I can, and you, with the help of a little morality and much kindness, will endure the pain which must attach to the harm you have done me, and to sustain your patience and your courage, you will think that I am going away while you are beginning a career which promises you happiness and gives you a taste of pleasure.

Oh! One is very strong when one has succeeded in stifling all remorse, and when there is nothing left but

to pity a wretched creature who no longer complains and who has got to the point of extinguishing within herself even the desires and vague hopes to which all the unhappy cling.

Yes, my friend, it is true: when I examine myself carefully, when I look close into myself, when I ask myself what I want, what is left for me in the world, I find no answer, except what a very weary traveller would ask: *a resting-place:* and I see mine at Saint-Sulpice.

But I have a gift for being always ill-timed! What a style, what pictures, to offer to a man who is just leaving some pleasure, who is busied with a thousand affairs, who does not know whom to listen to; a man to whom the Queen, and the King, have spoken with infinite kindness and affability! My friend, when I think over it well, I see that if you did me justice you would feel both scorn and horror for me.

But to change the note, I want to tell you that during one of my long sleepless nights, my thoughts turned to the comtesse de Boufflers; I asked myself what was the reason that, in spite of much intelligence, charm and attractiveness, she made, generally speaking, so little effect, and so little impression; I think I have found the reason. Do not be *stupid*, and tell me that I had not enough intelligence to explain my thoughts. Listen: don't you agree that there is in everything a conventional *truth*? There is the truth of painting, the truth of the theatre, the truth of emotion, the truth of conversation, etc., etc. Well, madame de Boufflers possesses the truth of nothing. Which explains how she has spent her life without touching, or interesting, even those people whom she has most wanted to please.

Will you look at the opposite side of the medal? You know a person who has all her life lacked attractiveness

of feature, and the graces which can please, interest, and touch, and yet this person has had more successes, and been a thousand times more beloved than she could ever have claimed to be. Do you know the secret of this ? It is because she has had the *truth* of everything, and has in addition, been true in everything. Despréaux has summed up what I have diluted with a pile of words :

> Nothing but the true is beautiful, it alone is amiable.
> Truth must reign everywhere, even in story.

My friend, if you found me at first a little stupid, I have become overpowering ; I know not what fare to serve up to you ; after making you weep with sadness, I am making you yawn from boredom. Indeed, that is called " loading the table," and I wear myself out to such an extent with you that I shall write to no one this evening, although I owe answers to Fontainebleau to people whom I do not make yawn ; but that is because they have a great store of indulgence, for one must not always be *vain*, even though there is a good deal of *truth* in it.

Oh ! my friend, what is a prime truth is that I love you with as much passion as if you had sacrificed your happiness to my repose and my pleasure. Yes, my misfortune seems all the more overwhelming since I should have liked to owe my happiness to you.

I shall not write after to-morrow, Thursday, because I suppose you will leave on Saturday. Has the Court more attraction than . . . ?

Letter 168

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Fontainebleau, Monday, 10.0 *p.m., October,* 1775.

I HAVE just this moment arrived, my friend. I received a letter from you this morning before I left. It ought to have given me pleasure since it was in your hand, and its expressions are a little calmer, but anxiety leaves no room for any other feeling. You are ill, in pain, so worn out that you have not the strength to write more than four lines. Heavens, how sad, how sweet, it is to love you! You leave one not a moment's rest. You would tire out many hearts: you only make me use every faculty of mine. I have seen no one. I know nothing. I am going to bed. Give me your news: I am lodging at Gournai's, the bath-keeper.

What was the expression which hurt you in my last letter? I would wipe it out with my blood. Remember, my friend, that my thoughts are always a thousand miles removed from any wish to hurt you. I love you, and I prove it to you; to console and comfort you is all my occupation.

But what is the matter with you? From what are you suffering? How can you content yourself with telling me vaguely that you are ill? Do you imagine that that is enough for me? I have a right to more details than your doctor, for your health is not his.

Good-bye.

Letter 169

TO THE COMTE DE GUIBERT

Thursday evening, 19 *October,* 1775.

My friend, I should be overwhelmed by your reproaches had my resolution not already forearmed me. I

blamed myself yesterday, and told you it was cruel and cowardly to make you suffer from a misfortune for which there is no remedy; one must either live, or die, from it; but chiefly one must be silent. Your mind is animated enough, you have known and appreciated misery and passion well enough, to understand the excesses to which either can carry one; I loathe and detest them all, I would I had died before I could offend you.

Perhaps I foresaw this new misfortune, when I wanted to quit life and flee from you; I felt that after the cruel loss I had suffered, my heart could never again get back to normal; indeed, I ought not to love again, I could not love again; the principle of my life, the God who sustained me, who inspired me, was no more, I was left alone in the word. Oh! Why were you there? Why draw close to me? At that moment, I needed neither consolation nor support. Why did you use words the sound of which was wont to fill my heart with sensibility or delight? Why did you adopt the language of a man who had just died for me? In short, why did you mislead the reason of one already disturbed by excessive grief? It was for you to judge, for you to decide; I could only lament and die. You see the awful results of this moment of forgetfulness on your part.

No doubt, at that time, you could not foresee in what poison you would steep my heart; but you knew that you did not love me enough to make the consolation and tranquillity of my life the first interest of yours. *That* was the crime. *That* was the source and the cause of all my suffering. When I became guilty, my mind lost its energy; I loved you, and from that time I was no longer capable of anything noble or strong.

I judge my own behaviour, my friend, and I blame

it more than I blame you ; when you pronounced my sentence, I ought to have endured it, to have torn myself from you, or from life. There is a baseness in wishing to be pitied and comforted by a man who has just struck one ; and so true is this, that an awful struggle goes on ceaselessly within me ; my mind revolts against your action, and my heart is full of tenderness for you. You are lovable enough to justify my inclination, but you have offended me too mortally for me not to feel humiliated by it.

My friend, I have often told you so before : my position is impossible ; there must be a catastrophe. I do not know whether nature or passion will provide it. Let us wait, and, above all, be silent, for as you say, you too have your burdens, your worries ; you leave me in ignorance of them because you are very sure that they would hurt me.

So you are kind enough, delicate enough, to spare my sensibility, and you think *I* am cruel enough to wish to test and alarm your virtue ? Oh ! my friend, if grief sometimes makes one egoistic, it also makes one very delicate ; the unhappy have as a rule very light hands ; they are so afraid of hurting, for they are always being warned by their own pain. And do you think that, when I have hardly strength enough left to complain, I hunt out and choose the expressions which can hurt you most ? You do not know me, for if I could check myself with you, if I was not a creature of impulse, no doubt I should be careful to avoid giving you pain. But consider who it is you love ! I think I have proved it to you by sometimes saying to you :

> Marriage, believe me, is for vulgar minds,
> For lovers given to unfaithfulness.

Well ! there is the substance of all my injuries ; such are my offences, my crime, if you like, towards

you. Yes, my friend, my hand on my conscience—and I am very sure that without any great effort of generosity, you will forgive me. But, I vow, I shall no more need your virtue ; I want to elevate my mind to the point of only needing your pardon.

I think your way of looking at and judging men so superior to mine, that I shall not amuse myself by opposing your judgment of M. Turgot ; it distresses me, and I only ask you to allow my old habit of thinking so differently to leave me still some doubts about your opinion. As for M. de Malesherbes, I have only known his intelligence, and the loftiness and disinterestedness of his heart ; I do not know his character, and it is character that makes men act.

I fully understand the repugnance, even the horror, which one feels for what chance has put so far out of one's reach : power, might ; they are revolting, when they are only instruments of hatred, or to let men be fools more at their ease ; but when merits, virtue, talents, have given anyone a higher place than me, I bless heaven for them, and am fully prepared to love one who has the power and the wish to do good.

So, my friend, I should not have suffered at Montigny, while I should be in torture at the dinner-table of the King, the Queen, the Emperor, etc., etc. Besides, you are not just ; these people have not robbed you of your share ; nature has placed between you and them a difference of age which ought to re-assure you. One day, you will see what they are, and no doubt you will do better than they are doing ; they are working to-day for your glory. All that has happened since the time of Colbert and Louvois, has made them great. So be patient.

Letter 170

TO THE SAME

Friday mid-day, 20 *October*, 1775.

I HURRY as if you could hear me sooner. My friend, you are mad: you are going to speak ill of M. Turgot to M. de Vaines! And for my sake too; my interests are leading you wrong. Now who compels you almost to tell M. de Vaines that he is wrong? Heavens, what wrong-headedness! But, how kind of you. How amiable you are! But you are making a mistake, if you let yourself think that poverty, or the ease which comes from wealth, could do anything either to bring me happiness or increase my misery.

My friend, neither M. Turgot, nor M. de Vaines, nor any power on earth, can do anything to make me happy, to tranquillise my mind, to drive out of it a harrowing emotion, to pour balm into my veins. Alas! it would be necessary for you to have loved me; but you find it easier to importune, to hate, a minister because he has the honesty not to concern himself about my fortunes. My friend,

Nor gold, nor greatness, gives us happiness.

This is truer of some types of mind than I can ever express it. I have never known any equivalent, any compensation, for anything which I have desired: passion is absolute: tastes can bend to circumstances. I have never wanted or loved but one thing, and, more consistent in this than is natural to my poor head, I have never repented of my way of behaving on the various occasions which I have had of enriching myself and increasing, or to speak more accurately, acquiring, an importance which fools dispense and which is the meat of empty heads and hearts.

Good-bye, my friend. I am expecting M. de Saint-Chamans. I will take up my pen again when the postman has come ; I hope, yes, I think, I shall have a letter from you. After seeing people about whom you care nothing, all day, you will have come home yesterday evening, saying : I am going to do something to give pleasure to one who loves me.

Friday, 4 o'clock, after the post.

No letter from you. Do you know how just I am ? It makes me hate letters from everyone else. What does the rest matter, when one's mind and one's thoughts are fixed on one single point ! I can very easily imagine how Newton could think of the same thing for thirty years, and the object which he set before himself was not of as much value as the one I promised myself. My friend, love is the chief good ; to be loved by the person one loves, is to be happier than God ; you talk of *Lucifer*, he claimed equality with God ; well, *I* have done better, for there have been times in my life when I would not have changed places with him. But how I am fallen !

I have no letter from you ? It is my own fault : M. de Vaines will have delayed sending you the letter I addressed to him. I wanted to follow you everywhere ; and you have not troubled to let me know. If we are to be sure of meeting, we must not wait for each other. My friend I read your letter of yesterday three times running ; what you say about the difference between intelligence and genius is admirable and most eloquent : the comparison is a work of *genius*. But I do not think, as you do, that for government one needs people full of passion ; character, not passion, is wanted. Intelligence is enough, and perhaps preferable, in a monarchy, where one needs a steady progress, in which happiness should come before fame ; and it is just

because I believe that neither passion nor genius are needed in a French minister, that I agree with you that there is no one more capable of governing us well than the archbishop of Toulouse, and I reply to you that there is no mind more inaccessible to passion.

Nor is it for his energy that one must praise him ; he possesses character, and much insight ; he is very active, and his easy manner and amiability smooth away all difficulties. That is my answer to all you said about M. Turgot ; he is more like Lycurgus, while the archbishop of Toulouse is like cardinal Richelieu and Colbert ; for he would have neither the forcefulness nor the cruelty of the cardinal.

My friend, you will receive this letter to-morrow, Saturday, and no doubt it will be the last, for I have no doubt you are leaving on Sunday. These are *my orders:* you will make a parcel of all my letters, put my address on it, and give it with your own hands into the hands of M. de Vaines, who will frank this precious charge ; and after that you will leave, and not write to me in that parcel, but by the post.

I want to know the hour and the minute of your leaving Fontainebleau ; yes, I am interested in it ; in what is one *not* interested, when one is in love ? I have certainly told you that I would not complain any more, that I would not again overwhelm you with the burden of my woes, but remember that I did not promise that my behaviour would be *perfect*, and uniform. That will come, perhaps ; my heart will not always find indifference impossible ; so I tell you that I will not make you suffer any more because of my misery ; but you must clearly understand that I shall be neither brave enough, nor reasonable enough, to make a show of not suffering when I feel torn in pieces.

Good-bye, my friend. It seems as if I am parting from you for a very long time, and the separation hurts

me more than when you are here and say good-bye to me ; then the moment alone exists for me, and I live with all my might in one point of time. But to-day it is not like that ; I feel sad and exhausted, I feel my privation of you and your letter, and I see to-morrow and the days after. Oh ! that future will be very long. Good-bye, good-bye.

Letter 171

to the same

Thursday evening, 24 October, 1775.

The oracles had ceased, because they were afraid of speaking to echoes. My last letter was on Friday afternoon ; I had thought that you would leave on Sunday or Monday, to-day I imagine that you are waiting for the arrival of M. de Saint-Germain, who is expected on Wednesday or Thursday. My friend, I see you on the way to do and say many foolish things ; believe me, if there is still time, stop yourself : that decision would certainly meet your approval, if you were not led away by other people's hatred and passion. He is a man of merit, he is unattached ; he has reached his position without intrigue, one must believe that he will want only what is good ; if he makes reforms, and changes, he will have the army's confidence because he is known to be a master of his subject and to have wide experience. No-one can utilise better than he the work you gave to M. Turgot.

Besides, you must think of yourself, and your fortunes ; he can use your talents, give you an active career ; you say yourself that he is prejudiced in your favour by a great interest, so why will you turn your back on fortune ? Why continue to be ambitious when

you want to parade hatred, or at any rate estrangement, towards all who might aid your ambitions ? Oh ! Heavens ! how wrong-headed you are ! How annoyed I am that you were at Fontainebleau at this moment ! Everything you have said will be repeated, poisoned, and you will be quite astounded at the coldness and indifference with which this man will greet you.

My friend, do not ever take it upon yourself to hate for the sake of MM de Broglie ; they do not need an aide-de-camp. But consider that one of them is a Marshal of France, the other has everything he can have : so whatever they may say to satisfy their passion can no longer do any harm to their fortunes ; but you are only beginning, and are surrounded by envious people, and that is at least synonymous with enemies. So try when you want a thing, to want the means to it also. Do at least have the wisdom of ambition.

But I am just like the mother of the *Indiscret* ; I am not so eloquent as she, but I might well say to you, like her : " What answer have you to that ? " And you would certainly reply, like the *Indiscret* : " Not a word : I agree with you."

I loathe the character
Of one who never can be silent.

I have received your letters of Friday and Sunday ; they are short, they are few ; but, my friend, I do not complain ; you have so many different interests, and they need so much attention, that I cannot imagine how you can manage them all ; everyone must thank you, but no-one be happy. Do not repeat that I must *try* to make the best of your position. My friend, the words *you must try*, when it is a question of feeling or passion, are merely harsh or absurd ; it is when conduct, business, interesting things are concerned, that one must indeed *try*, one must make an effort, because

actions and measures are then guided, or ought to be guided, by reflection; and it is folly, or levity to be ceaselessly acting contrary to one's plans or one's interests.

But for me, *I will try! I will make an effort!* Why? What is my object? What do I want? No, no, my friend, I have missed my life's aim, there is no interest left for me. I shall be silent, no doubt, but not as a result of *trying*; it will be after I have weighed up, and judged everything, and above all after seeing the end very near; it will be in order to calm myself, if possible, in this final period of suffering; one can endure anything at the end of a journey. I do not want to cause you to live on remorse; I should not like even to cause you a regret; I do not need any tears after my death; I ask no more of you than the indulgent kindness which one gives to the sick and the unhappy.

Good-bye, my friend. I have spent a cruel day; I have coughed myself to death. I am a little feverish this evening. Still I must write a line to M. de Vaines; I am sending this letter to him.

Letter 172

to the same

Thursday, 6.0 *p.m.*, 26 *October*, 1775.

You shall have a line to-morrow morning. I have your letter, it is the first I have had the day after you wrote it. Usually it takes three days; but, as you say, one must submit to this way of living, for you will not change it. But at the same time you must not think it extraordinary if, while I am everlastingly uncertain what you are doing and where you are, I am not always

so punctual. I wrote to you yesterday, that is to say on Tuesday evening, by M. Turgot's messenger; I asked M. de Vaines to send you my letter, and it seems you must have read it when you wrote to me.

You say what I needed to hear; stay in that good state of mind. I think honesty and reflection will confirm you in it. It is a good thing, if you can indeed manage it, not to be ambitious, but at the least you must not give yourself the reputation of being an uneasy, restless person who cannot endure anything superior to yourself. My friend, you must be *yourself*, and you will do very well. I have overwhelmed you with the most ordinary advice, with the most commonplace morality, but sometimes you need to be led back to the trodden path.

Oh! Heavens! Are you mad, that you ask the comte de Crillon for news of me? He will know only one thing about me: he will know of my death: everything else might as well be happening in China as far as he is concerned. He knows that he loves his wife, he *feels* that he is rich, and I swear that he will never get away from those two subjects of conversation until he gains the life eternal.

No, I am not well, I have a racking cough which does not allow me a moments rest.

I do not reply to what you say of M. de Saint-Germain: because I am full to bursting. My friend, all I want is for you to put no obstacle in your way; the man certainly has merit, much merit. He has been fond of you: why should you, as M. de Saint-Marc says preciously, give *your star a sound thrashing*? Goodbye. But is it really true that you need my love? That does not prove that you are a man of feeling, but merely that you are greedy and insatiable. I shall write to you by M. Turgot's messenger; send to M. de Vaines for a letter to-morrow, Friday, at 6.0. But, in

God's name, do you write to me before 9.0 ; the post goes out at that hour, and if you only knew how miserable it is to get a letter three days old when one is only fourteen leagues away ! It shows such indifference, such carelessness.

I had a letter this morning at 9.0 sent yesterday evening at the same hour, and so it is every day. Whatever you may say, care and attention prove something. My room is full, and there are even two people of whom I am very fond.

Letter 173

to the same

Midnight, Thursday, 26 October, 1775.

The conversation will not have been interrupted very long, and yet you will have had time to breathe. You are very lucky if you breathe freely, for that is impossible for me, and I cannot tell you how it hurts ; but I want to talk about you, my friend. I think you will be doing wrong if you leave M. de Saint-Germain at once ; in the first flurry, he will see nothing, nothing will make any mark, whereas if you were there after the first moments, he would come closer to you, and you could be useful to him in a thousand ways.

The man has fallen from the clouds, he will have thousands of questions to ask, and he has enough experience not to ask them haphazardly. He has known you from a child, you were *his son*, and one is not afraid of committing oneself before a young man of whom one is fond ; in short, I may be wrong, but I regard these early moments as being very important for you. In a fortnight, people would tell him that you are devoted to the Broglies, that you went off

again immediately in order that they might not be suspicious about your presence at Fontainebleau. Consider, my friend, show no false generosity or levity in your behaviour ; I tell you as I see things. I know that there is an intensity of interest which disturbs one's clear-sightedness, but you are even nearer yourself than I am ; so distrust yourself.

You say nothing more of your business ; what does that mean ? Has it turned out as you wished ? Or are you as negligent in it as M. le maréchal de Duras is frivolous ? What a fine pair of negotiators !

M. de Vaines sings your praises to me, in the best of all ways : he praises you with his mind. I tell you this to prove to you that you did not wound him on the day when you spoke to him of me ; but you would wound *me* if you returned to the subject. My friend, the first rule of friendship is to serve our friends as they want to be served, were their wishes the most extraordinary in the world ; one ought to have the delicacy to give in to their will in matters which are directly personal to them. So let that be an end of your activity ; use it on some other object, for, I repeat, you would offend me if you ever busied yourself with my interests. You must consider that I need not have remained poor unless I liked ; so poverty cannot be the greatest evil in my eyes. My friend, believe me, I always speak the truth, and I know very well what I want.

You have not said a word about the shows ; you do not say anything of what you are doing ; you feel no need to chatter to me ; you only need to be everywhere, and see everything. Would that God would give you His power of being everywhere at the same time. It would drive me to despair if I had that talent ; I am very far from wishing to be everywhere, for I should much like to be nowhere. Oh ! Heavens,

I should like to have the same delusion as Mme de Muy, I should think I had found happiness again : she is sure that she will see M. de Muy again : what a help for a desolate heart !

Four years ago at this time I used to get two letters a day from Fontainebleau ; the absence lasted ten days, and I had twenty-two letters. But that was because, though he was plunged into the amusements of the Court, though he was a lion of fashion, and the most beautiful women were infatuated by him, he had only one concern, only one pleasure : he wished to live in my thoughts, to fill my whole life ; and indeed I remember that during those ten days I did not go out once : I was expecting a letter or writing one. Oh! Those memories kill me ! Still I would I could begin again, even under more cruel conditions, for I should like never to have known you, and to have poisoned myself on the 2nd June, 1774.[1] Heavens ! What miseries I should have spared myself ! My friend, if you see to the bottom of my heart, how you must pity me ! But do not tell me so ; it is courage I need, yes, I need it, for I am suffering cruelly. Tell me whether you receive news of madame de M . . . regularly. Have you done anything in the matter in which she was interested ? You tell me nothing, but then you are in such a hurry. Do you not intend to stop working on M. de Mesnil-Durand's book ? M. de Saint-Germain will perhaps reply to it in four words ; that will save you a great deal of trouble ; still if it were a means of adding to your reputation, I should regret it for you.

The chevalier de Chastellux is going to have a play he has written performed ; he lets no on see it ; he found this method most successful with *Agathe*, and I hope it will be of equal advantage to him this time.

[1] This passage, until now unpublished, fixes the date of the day on which Mlle de Lespinasse learned of M. de Mora's death. [V.-G.]

What a world it is! What a ſtream of society! They[1] play and write comedies, and they are always making ſcenes of the ſentimental type with each other; they torment themſelves from morning to evening; ſelf-love complains on one ſide, unbridled vanity on the other. I die of fear leſt with the talents they both have for comedy, and even for tragedy, they ſhould wind up with a cataſtrophe a play that ought to end quietly.

You can ſee that I cannot write to you until your departure, eſpecially when it is not fixed. I do not want a letter to be left behind after you leave. Good-bye; I love you wherever I am, but not wherever you are. That, or death, is the cataſtrophe for me.

Letter 174

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Fontainebleau, Friday evening,
27 October, 1775.

My friend, it is too late for my letter to go. It is a day loſt; a day on which you will not have a thing which ſometimes conſoles you, and which you are good enough always to look out for. It was my fault; I wanted to go to *Blanche and Guiſcard*, which I had never ſeen played and had never even read. I thought it would finiſh earlier; I was wrong and I ſuffer for it as much as you, I had had your letter at 6.0, having called on M. de Vaines to get it.

My friend, how full of kindneſs and intereſt it is! What! In the midſt of all your troubles you ſtill think of me ſo whole-heartedly, and with the deep reaſoning which ſeems to belong only to people who

[1] i.e., Chaſtellux and Mlle de Gléon.

do not suffer? Your advice is excellent; your intelligence grasps the measure, the true measure, of everything. I had however, of my accord, already begun to behave well. I have said nothing that was not the fruit of reflection and reason. Many people have wanted to make me talk about M de Saint-Germain, and you would have been pleased with my answers. I am doing still better; I was disturbed part of last night by thoughts of the good the man can do, and dreams of what I would do in his place, and when I got up I wrote him a fifteen-page letter to which I attached one of the memoranda I drew up for M. Turgot, the most important one, referring him to M. Turgot for the others of which I have no copy. The letter, my friend, is what it ought to be, warm and reasonable, ripe and animated. I showed it to M. de Vaines who was delighted with it, to M. de Vaines alone, I do not count the chevalier d'Aguesseau, and I handed it this evening to M. Dubois, late aide-de-camp to M. de Saint-Germain, a man on whom I can rely, and who will give it into his own hands.

The height of wisdom, after a letter like that, is the part I am taking: to see what happens, and for that reason to go away. I have put my address in the letter; it is not for him to be ignorant how to find people who are in retirement, if one needs them. By going away, I also prevent people attributing remarks to me.

A hundred fools saw the tender welcome he gave me this morning at his reception, and this afternoon too at M. de Vergennes'. "Excellent young man," he called me several times, holding out his hand. And silly people immediately surrounded me, asking where I had got to know him so well, where I had seen him, if I knew his opinions on the army, etc.; for, my friend, you have never known such a conglomeration of

baseness and folly as there has been here for the last four days. The very people who intrigued to make another minister, say: *Ah! That is a real choice! the only choice!* And one has not the right to drive these people into their burrows!

So I am leaving to-morrow afternoon immediately after dinner with M. de Malesherbes where M. de Saint-Germain is dining. I need to get back to a place where I can be quiet, and do something. I have spent twelve days in killing idleness and agitation. I have so many things to do that I do not know how I shall manage them, first I must collect my ideas on the organisation of the army, in case M. de Saint-Germain wants to employ me; then I must compose an answer to M. de Mesnil-Durand. Although his system is dealt a mortal blow by the appointment of M. de Saint-Germain whose opinion is absolutely opposed to his, he is not sufficiently slaughtered. Besides I have begun it. I have taken the trouble to read I know not how many volumes, and I must enjoy the fruits of my exertions.

Then I have to touch up the *Constable*; my head is full of great changes in the fourth and fifth acts; for you know it is to be played again. That is against your advice, but how can one refuse, when the Queen asks for it so urgently? She has shown a grace and kindness which one cannot resist. One must add, too, that the hope she has given me of those pensions assures her of infinite charm, for I confess I am interested for the sake of people I love:

> I boast not of an effort ostentatious
> To watch serene the harshness of their lot.

So there, as you see, is plenty of work; my relaxations, my pleasure, will be to write to you, but I doubt whether you will be willing to increase it by

writing to me. When I leave Fontainebleau I must no doubt give up your letters; I must even tear myself from those which I have received from you, which I should like to carry off with me to my retreat. I am going to put them all together and hand them to M. de Vaines, and this will not go by the same route; is not that the most literal execution of your orders?

But what a strange way of loving yours is! It is full of distrust, and anyone in the world but me would be offended by it. You will say, to offend me still more, that it is because nothing offends me, because in everything I show an irresponsibility, a lightness, a carelessness, which justify you; my friend, you will be wrong, you will say what you do not believe:

In her heart Phaedra is more just to me.

My friend, as I collected your letters together, and before tearing myself away from them, I have read them over again. There are several things which I have not answered. The unrest of this part of the country prevents one from having a long conversation, and yet that is a pleasure it is very sweet to share with you, it is one of your most winning charms. For instance, I have said nothing about my business; nothing about madame de M . . .; well, listen. Madame de M . . . has written to me several times, and, as usual, shows a reasonableness and a friendship which are very pleasant and amiable. She has been deeply interested in the choice of a minister; every advantage or disadvantage which might accrue to me from it has entered her head.

On my part, I have been very busy with the business of M. de Marnaval (I think I have mentioned it to you), in which she was exceedingly interested. It is that lease of some iron-works which the chevalier de Chastellux has had broken in favour of a man from

Juvigny called M. de Lesseville, who gives him a thousand crowns by way of interest, which you told me was for madame de Gléon. I moved heaven and earth; got M. de Vaines to act, but without success. My consolation is that Berry, where the iron-works are situated, is going to be given as an appanage to the comte d'Artois, so the lease will be broken, and the chevalier and I will have only the empty shells.

Am I not abusing, to a disgusting extent, the right you gave me to talk to you of everything that occupies me? Judge how I value your opinion, from all the details I go into with you. I had another piece of business to do with M. de Malesherbes, which affected one of my friends; it has been started, and will, I hope, succeed. Finally, I had a most important matter to do with the Minister of War, in which I reckoned on using the Queen's influence; it is to get the promise of the first vacant legion. I am putting that off till another time.

We must let M. de Saint-Germain settle down, and he will probably be disposed to look favourably on me.

My friend, once more I am abusing your kindness.

I have told you all that has occupied me during my stay here; it only remains to speak of you. Do you still have attacks of suffocation? You tell me that you cannot breathe easily, and possibly that refers to your mind, even more than your body. Heavens, how I should have liked to be able to spend twenty-four hours in Paris! How I long to get back there! Believe in my wishes and my regrets. I should have been there, my friend, but I have had reasons I could not get over. I should be free at the moment, but I am expected at Courcelles; they are very anxious about me. I had said I should arrive on Monday and by an extraordinary chance a letter I wrote did not reach them.

Good-bye. What ? You will not write any more ? I seize greedily upon a hope that comes into my heart ; your last two letters are addressed to Ousson,[1] in case I was no longer here. Why should you not continue to do so ? But these words terrify me : *I do not love you wherever you are.* Oh ! my friend, I love you wherever I am, and I shall never change. *Blanche and Guiscard* had greatly interested me. Its style and thought are weak, but it is touching. It made me weep. The catastrophe made me tremble, and one line in it I think superb :

To waking grief how long the night doth seem.

My friend, it recalled painfully some nights in my life and in yours.

Letter 175

TO M. DE GUIBERT, COLONEL, CHEZ GOURNAI, BATHING-MASTER, FONTAINEBLEAU

Friday, 27 October, 1775.

I have just had three letters from Fontainebleau ; they are dated the 26th and M. de Saint-Germain had not yet arrived. My friend, you told me on Wednesday morning that you were writing to me that evening, and from that moment you have not had a thought for me. Do at least tell me whether you have had two letters through M. de Vaines, and one by the post : one dated Tuesday, and two yesterday, Thursday.

When I saw all those letters from Fontainebleau, I had no doubt but that there was one from you ; Heavens, how unjust you make me. My first impulse is always to read letters from Fontainebleau with

[1] Cf. Letter 163.

distaste, when they have deceived my hopes. Oh! No! no! you are not the person one ought to love; you are in such constant motion, you evaporate so quickly, that one cannot count on you at all. I am not criticising you, but I condemn myself with all the reason and the strength I have left.

The archbishops of Aix and Toulouse left this morning for Fontainebleau. My friend, you judged the latter's condition with the same lively interest which makes the comte de Crillon say that I am well; he is in a very bad way, and I am very anxious about him; he has the best of treatments, but I am much afraid it will not be able to make headway against his illness; he is cheerful and not yet anxious: he sets little value on life, although he has hardly felt any unhappiness.

I admire your justice, my friend: when you blamed the choice of the ministers, it was M. Turgot who did it; now, when on second thoughts you have discovered that it was the best choice that could have been made, it is no longer M. Turgot, but M. de Malesherbes. As you will, but you will have great difficulty in putting two different wills into those two heads; there is only one, and that is always to do the best possible thing. Oh! yes! I love them; that is not the word: I cherish and respect them from the bottom of my heart. They have had the goodness to let me share their pleasure in the King's choice. It is not gratitude which attaches me to M. Turgot; he might forget my existence, and I should still remember all his worth.

That is my answer to all you sent me from Montigny; wisdom counsels me to refrain from replying on the impulse of the moment; you had wounded me, and I said nothing; that is the only way of behaving that I know now. I do not know whether M. Nicole has forgotten that method of keeping the peace: it is as

good as any other. Good-bye, my friend. You have said nothing to me, and I talk to you. I have three letters here, and I do not answer them ; that is even worse than in the Gospel where those who came at the eleventh hour were rewarded just like those who had borne the burden of the day.

By the way, I forgot to tell you that madame de Boufflers has twice repeated to me that she thought you *very happy*. I told her I had no doubt of it, but that you were not as *severe* as she. Madame de Martinville is at Martigny. My friend, she is possibly going to give or receive a receipt for the 22,000 francs a year. If I did not seem to you too outrageous, I should say that I hate, yes, loathe, money when I think that it can buy everything. Fie !

Letter 176

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE, RUE SAINT-DOMINIQUE, OPPOSITE BELLECHASSE, FAUBOURG SAINT-GERMAIN

2.0 *a.m.*, 1775 (*Autumn*).

My friend, with what words, what deeds, can I win pardon for the impulse which carried me away ! You accuse me, you condemn me, you hate me, you think I have no morals, no virtue. Oh ! At least, do not think me lacking in sensibility. I am full of you, I am dying of repentance and regret ; I cannot sleep. You have punished me cruelly for my weakness, you have made me expiate fully the wretched aberration of my reason.

I told you that I loved you, I did indeed love you. All the fire and disorder of passion were in my heart ; and you repulsed me with every evidence of hatred and contempt. Did I deserve them ? Listen to me, Listen to me just this once. You know that when you

wish, you will compel me to be silent. I will keep back even my justification, if you wish to hear no more: it will be *Wenceslas's*:

> I went, I was, such power has love over me.

Yes, never has it intoxicated me to such an extent. Your letters, the very letters which should chill my ardour, the memory of the past which suddenly rose up before me, my hand which touched yours—what can I say? I was no longer master of myself. . . . Still, I restrained myself, you saw it. From what moments of ecstasy I tore myself! My friend, are those efforts, those sacrifices, a proof of neither love nor virtue? I had them, I still have them.

I am in despair at having displeased you; I cannot say "offended." One can only offend when one despises or when one cold-bloodedly schemes to seduce and inflame, and I was so far from scheming! My mind was so innocent, so pure; I was reading over again your letters and mine in order to drink in deeply the friendship to which we were both condemned to reduce ourselves. My friend, forgive me. I am annoyed at having to go to Versailles to-morrow, but I am to go for some business of the chevalier d'Agues-seau's. I shall put off my journey till late, and shall come to-morrow to throw myself at your feet, and ask your forgiveness. Never have I deserved it more. Never have you been so dear to me.

I shall try to come back from Versailles early enough to come and see you in the evening. Send a line in answer to this, if I do not come. Send it to the duchesse d'Anville's. Do not leave the painful weight of your hatred upon me, it is more than I can endure.

You will have the note to-morrow when you wake up; but, alas! will you have slept?

Good-bye.

Letter 177

TO M. DE GUIBERT, RUE DE GRAMMONT[1]

Monday, 11 *o'clock*, *November*, 1775.

I reckoned on seeing you; I needed to see you. I know not how to write, I am afraid of speaking to you; my mind is in torture; I mix up everything; I no longer know whether it is crime or virtue which bring, unhappiness; I do not know which is the more painful, remorse or regret; in a word, I succumb to such a mass of trouble, and of evils. I live, and, I repeat, the thing that keeps me alive is the feeling that I am loved. The word fell from my heart yesterday evening, and your doubt made me abjure it.

You see, you carry me away from everything; after a quarter of an hour in your presence, I remain alone in the universe with you; you annihilate the past and the future; you are no longer guilty, I no longer unhappy.

Tell me, is there any law, any duty, in nature which has such power? Tell me, and I will submit to it. Yes, I think, the last effort of virtue is to love while giving up entirely one's own interest, one's own happiness, one's own pleasures. Alas! I do not praise myself; can a heart oppressed by grief feel any return of vanity?

I wanted to tell you again to take care what you say about the Villerois. Forestall cackling, there is yet time. And then I wanted to take a hand in your clothing. My friend, I want you to have a brown coat, a deep brown, embroidered with silver sequins at regular intervals, embroidery on your buttonhole with a jonquil coloured waist-coat and the coat lined with the same material. You will think me mad: it is the

[1] Unpublished. [V-G.]

first time I have had such a notion; be a dear and forgive me.

I do not know whether I shall have the strength to go to Tivoli; that poor mother needs me; in sharing her affliction, I comfort her heart. Heavens, how cruel it is to wait in such heart-rending anxiety. It is good of you, my friend, to have been to get news; they will be the same as I had from madame de Melet and M. de Vaines. To-morrow they will be decisive and perhaps fatal. Did you say yesterday "*what if it were you?*" Oh! I should be beyond all bounds, I should die before I endured such a misfortune. Let me see you to-morrow morning. I hope you will hear before 11.0, and that will decide my day.

Please, write to Bordeaux and ask for my two letters; but perhaps you have had them to-day by the Montauban courier; you will give me them back to-morrow, with this. How rash you are! How just it is to distrust you!

I shall not go to Tivoli, I have just written to M. Boutin. I am spending the evening with Mme de Meulan.

Letter 178

to m. de guibert[1]

Tuesday, 7 November, 1775, at post-time.

Even the most reasonable woman is mad or childish for two-thirds of her life, for is it not childishness and lunacy to give in to the need of answering you, when I am sure that I shall not send you my letter? But, my friend, this is busying myself with you in a more determined way than by only thinking of you, it is doing something to relieve myself, it is restoring action

[1] Unpublished. [V-G.]

to my brain, which had fallen into a state of paralysis ever since it no longer acted for you ; in short, if it is doing nothing for you, it is doing something for the passion which tyrannises over my life.

I read your little note on Sunday ten times : can you have thought it very warm, pressing, decided ? Oh ! That would be a great mistake, for it is very cold, and it produced perfectly the effect it should, that is, no effect at all. Oh ! no ! You are neither *anxious*, nor *desperate* ; you are, at most, a little annoyed, when the postman comes. A quarter of an hour afterwards, it has all passed over. Oh ! My friend there is nothing deep, or consistent in you. There are days when the news of my death would hardly affect you at all ; and, see whether I know you, perhaps there are moments when you would be overwhelmed by it.

But remember that it is a long time since I first told you that the feeling people aroused in you was so fleeting that it could not even be called emotion ; it is preference, pleasure, the abandonment of vanity. That is what you are to those whom you say you love, for you feel neither the interest which makes one disturbed by the misfortunes of those whom one loves, nor that which makes it necessary to share everything that affects one's friend ; you have neither the tenderness which consoles a sick mind, nor the kindness which relieves pain. Yes, I repeat, even in love you do not love.

But you are perhaps just the one man in the world with whom a woman who has given way to her passion might most easily deceive herself into believing herself his chief, his sole, interest. You are so amiable, so full of life, your emotions have always the suddenness and the warmth of passion ; in intimate converse you show such sweetness of disposition, are so easy to please, that one needs to look very closely if one is to discover that that is merely the result of your character,

and by no means the effect of passion. And yet, so true is this, even when you seem to give up everything, you would be incapable of making a real sacrifice for one who loved you, and even were it the price of the peace, even the life, of one who was devoted to you, you would not give up one of your schemes of ambition or advancement; at such critical moments, you remain alone in the world face to face with your personal interest, well or ill conceived.

Remember that in the early stages of our acquaintance, when I had not your actions before me as a proof, I repeated to you several times that I thought you infinitely selfish; I astonished you, and then it was easy for you to justify yourself; to-day, it would not be the same; I should overwhelm you with proofs and examples, and, to leave you without any answer, I should say: you knew the reality of my passion, you knew the violence of my character, you had barely formed the plan of a marriage in which your fame and your fortune were not deeply interested, you knew that if you carried out that plan you were condemning me either to kill myself on the spot, or to die of grief; well, you concluded the marriage, and two days afterwards, you had the cruelty to write me a note so infamous that if one could put the situation into a story, that note would be refused as being incredible either in truth or probability.

Yes, allow me to believe that you are either the most cruel or the most frivolous of men; let me believe that the height of misfortune to an active and passionate heart is to have let itself give way to its inclination towards you. Oh, Heavens! is not all that I have suffered, all that I am suffering now, a most grievous expiation of my weakness and my crime? Must the few days of life that remain to me be still filled with anxiety, remorse and grief?

Yes, my friend, you have struck me to the heart ; I shall die from the blow, and by the cruellest of deaths, for it is lingering ; but in the convulsions of the despair which is eating away my life, with the last breath which will animate it, I shall ever repeat : why did you not let me die for M. de Mora ? Then I was satisfying my passion, I was expiating my crime. Did you want to make me know a stage of misery even deeper than that by which I was carried away ? How well you have succeeded ! How deep is the feeling of grief which you have implanted in my heart ! There are moments, there are days, when I am quite ready to believe that I have only known grief since I loved you.

Heavens ! What a dreadful destiny ! The most blameworthy action of my life sometimes enwraps the whole of it ; yes, my friend, the feeling of my fault often extinguishes the memory of the passion which inspired me for eight years. Oh ! you do not yet know the extremes of misery and passion ! You have not looked deep enough into a heart which is full of you. I am no longer myself when I see you ; your presence charms away all my ills ; you alternately give me over to fever, or take me from it ; when you appear, I hardly know whether I have suffered.

My friend, when I see you I do not need you to love me ; heaven is in my heart ; I no longer judge yours, I forget that you are to blame, I love you. But these violent shocks are too severe for my mechanism, and so true is this, that since your departure I have been prostrate ; I have not had an hour without pain ; my mind's sickness passes into my body. I am feverish every day, and my doctor, who is not the cleverest of men, constantly repeats that I am being eaten up by worry, that my pulse and my respiration show an active grief, and he always goes away saying : " we have no remedy for the mind."

There is no longer any remedy for me, but it is not a cure that I want, but calm, the power to recapture some moments of repose in order to direct myself towards that which nature will soon grant me. That thought is the only thing which gives me repose; I have no longer the strength of passion, my mind tires me, torments me, I have nothing now to sustain me. Desire and hope are dead within me; the weaker I become the more a single thought obsesses me. No doubt I do not love you better than I have loved you, but that is because I no longer love anything, because physical pains bring me back ceaselessly to myself; there is no distraction, no diversion, left.

The long nights, the lack of sleep, have made my feeling into a kind of mania; it has become a fixed point, and I know not how it is that I have not twenty times let slip words which would lay bare the secret of my life and of my heart. Sometimes, in the midst of company, I am surprised by my tears, and am forced to retire.

Alas! in depicting the extremity of my madness to you, I do not want to touch your heart, since I think you will never read this. Besides, in my present condition, what have I to hope or fear from you? The belief that you are honourable is enough to make me very sure of all your actions until the end. There are situations which would compel the sympathy of harsh and unfeeling hearts; all those who surround me seem to be more interested in me; when people see an eternal separation approaching, they draw closer to each other. I could not sufficiently value the attentions and the friendship of my friends; they do not console me, but it is certain that they bring some sweetness into my life; I love them, and should like to love them more, and above all I should like them not to have so good an opinion of me.

They all think that it is M. de Mora's death which is killing me. My friend, if they knew that it was you, that it was your marriage which dealt the mortal blow! Oh! how they would detest me, how contemptible I should seem to them! Ah! They would not accuse me more loudly or more forcibly than my conscience does. Good-bye; I succumb beneath so many painful thoughts; still, by pouring out my heart, I have relieved it a little.

Letter 179

to the same

Wednesday, 8 November, 1775.

You need my letters, and my presence is not necessary to you. You spent five days in Paris, reproaching me, and yourself also, for every moment you stayed. You were for a fortnight at Fontainebleau, where hardly a day passed when you could not have found a convenient opportunity to come over and go back again. You knew that I was ill, you knew the share you had in my illness; and then you send me word—and I am to be overwhelmed with pleasure and gratitude by it—that *if you had come to Paris, I should have been the sole object of your journey*. And you did not do so! And then you dare to say that if this does not fill me with the tenderest thoughts, I must have become very hard to please and very unjust.

Oh! how heavily you weigh upon my heart when you want to prove to me that it ought to be pleased with yours! I should never complain, but you often compel me to cry out, so sharp and so deep is the hurt you cause me. My friend, I have been loved; I still am, and I die of regret when I think that it is not by you.

It is useless to tell myself that I never deserved the happiness which I regret, my heart this time bids my vanity be silent ; it tells me that if I was ever to be loved it should be by the man who exercised such charm over me as to distract me from M. de Mora and keep me alive after losing him. But is one ever loved by the one whom one loves ? Is there any justice or reflection in so involuntary and so absolute an affection as mine ?

Oh ! If it could have been subjected by my will, how long it is since you would have been nothing to me ! Yes, I say *nothing*, for, my friend, even at the risk of offending you I will say that I have seen you too close to want you to be my friend, were you not the man whom I love most in the world ; your conversation hurts me in many ways ; besides, I find you incapable of the attentions, the steadiness, the interest which friendship demands. But do not be afraid ; you possess a power which repairs for everything, which makes up for anything in the world ; you please, and you have all the qualities, all the attractions, which can make one vain of loving you, and of calling oneself a friend of yours. Who is not flattered to call himself the friend of a man who has no equal, who has talent, genius, and must of necessity carve out what is called a great fortune ?

That is what has brought to your knees the whole family into which you have entered ; that is what makes it flatter and caress your vanity from morning till evening ; that is how it attracted you, that is why you gave in to it, and will be subject to it all the rest of your life.

Alas ! If you are happy, that is enough. A greater degree of power, of loftiness of thought, of philosophy, would perhaps make you more loved and more esteemed by some virtuous people ; but with your taste for

ambition, it is worth far more to you to produce an effect on the mass, and your whole behaviour is of a kind to deserve that species of success which often leads to fortune but which must often make one say also that :

Fortune sells what one believes her gifts.

Letter 180

TO THE SAME[1]

Thursday, 9 November, 1775.

I WRITE to you every day. But this time I am really talking to you, for I shall give you this letter. You know well what I want more than anything : to tell you the truth, at the risk of your thinking me devoid of common sense.

I disapprove of the great changes you have made in the *Constable*, and here are my reasons : I doubt whether they will suffice to put your play in the state necessary to fulfil all the rules laid down by the craftsmen, such as M. de Voltaire, etc., etc., . . . Besides, the part of *Adelaide* will be turned absolutely upside down ; if death becomes necessary, she will have to resemble *Zulime* and not one of Corneille's Roman matrons. But you have understanding and talent enough to have made a tender and passionate heart out of a proud and lofty character ; so I do not pause over that.

But note that when you alter and upset the play in this fashion, it will be judged afresh, and more severely than it was the first time, which is quite just. The first time, you yielded to the Queen's wishes ; you announced that you had never thought of writing it

[1] Unpublished. [V-G.]

for the ſtage; from that moment, indulgence was certain. There is a certain simplicity in your conduct, and there is no queſtion of an author's vanity; people are grateful to you for all the beauties which are packed into the piece: they praise your talent, and if they allow themselves some criticism, whether of the plot, or the diction, they add: "he did not write it to be played."

But now, my friend, here you are with all an author's pretentions; you reverse everything. So you are forced to accomplish much, for it is clearly proved that it was for the ſtage that you made the changes. No one will doubt but that you yourself persuaded the Queen to ask for it again so that you might produce it with corrections from which you promise yourself great success. Will you have that success, even supposing it is moſt highly deserved? Do you think that M. de Saint-Germain's welcome and the kindness which the Queen shows towards you have not aroused envy?

I hear the hissing of the snakes, and nothing in the world would tempt me to be present at this second representation, which I ſtill disapprove with all my heart. But if, as you say, it was inevitable, it ought to seem so, and, for that, your piece should have been exactly as the Queen saw it the firſt time.

The only change you ought to have allowed yourself, was to spend your whole time on the purity, the elegance, the nobility, of the ſtyle; everyone, when the play was over, ought to have said: "Why, I did not think it was so well written; why, there is no negligence in it, no incorrectness; why, he writes verses wonderfully; why, his play would have been applauded to the skies if he had meant in the firſt place to write it for the theatre; it is written like Voltaire; he did well to give it a second time, the merits of the ſtyle escaped us at the firſt."

That, my friend, is what I should have liked to hear people say. Instead, there will be a frightful storm of criticism, and whatever change you make, I answer for it that it will kill the real beauties of your work. People will not judge the part of *Adelaide*, they will judge the pretensions of the author, who does in fact take on a different contract with the public. My friend, even if you killed me, I would maintain that I am right ; and then you will do as you like ; I wash my hands of it. But I will not tell you as will all those ladies who know how to flatter and not how to feel : " How fine it is ! How it has gained by the change ! How successful it will be ! " I will repeat a hundred times : no, it will not be successful, precisely because it has been changed !

Come, I am silent, for I would wager that this is not what you would like to hear ; you have been working ; what you wrote before seems to you detestable ; *you will compel the silly public to do you justice ; there is a degree of talent which crushes envy ;* well, be mad, if you want to be.

Letter 181

to the same

Thursday, 11.0 *p.m.*, 9 *November*, 1775.

My friend, I wrote you four pages this morning, but I cannot bring my day to an end without saying that I love you. I have just seen the person who loves me best in the world, and that has only made me realise more clearly how much I used to love you. If I had heard you announced, and had not expected you, after three months absence, how I should have trembled from head to foot ! How certainly I should not have

known a word I was saying, or that was said to me!

My friend, one must love if one is to know the full extent of the blessings and pleasures which nature has granted to men; no doubt it is sweet to be loved, but it is in response to love that happiness lies. For to judge, and appreciate the affection of a lovable man, to respond correctly to involuntary impulses, to see sadness and displeasure depicted by turns on the face of someone who is filled with longing for your happiness —if this flatters the vanity of some silly woman, how deeply it afflicts an honourable and sensitive heart! My friend, I might say to you what Pyrrhus said to Andromache:

> Did one of the sighs that my heart sends to thee
> Escape towards her, what joy it would give.

Heavens, would you not suffer if you had no news of me? Does it not make a void in your life? Can you be so busy or so intoxicated as not to feel now an active need, now a great weariness? Am I not very near your thoughts when I am not their subject? Oh! my friend, my questions depict only a very feeble part of all I feel; I am dying of unhappiness.

My friends think that I am affected by my pain; I saw how kind M. d'Anlezi and M. de Schomberg were this evening: they tried to reassure me about my chest, my cough distressed them, and they tried to console me, good people that they are. They do not know all that I suffer. But I do not deserve to be pitied, even by you, for see how extreme is my foolishness! I feel that I love you more than my heart and my body can endure; I feel that I am dying from not being in communication with you. This privation is the cruellest of all tortures to me; I count the days, the hours, the minutes; my head is always wandering, for I want the impossible: I want to have news of you on

the days when the postman does not come. In short, what shall I say? I love you to madness, and like a mad woman.

Well, after this, understand me if you can: I do not send you my letters; I shock you, I irritate you, if only by my contradictions. There is something more: it is this: if by any chance you were forced to stay in the place where you are[1] for six months or a year, or all your life, I think I can answer for it that you would never hear a word of me.

So imagine, this being my state of mind, what horror that accursed note caused me, dated as it was from the place which depicts itself to me in a more horrible light than Hell ever depicted itself to St. Theresa or the most mystical of brains. No reason in all nature can combat so fatal an impression; I still shudder when I remember that date and the few lines which followed it.

Oh! Heavens! what had happened to you? Had you ceased to be a man? Were you a tiger?

Good-bye. This memory dries up my heart a little.

10 *November, Friday, after post-time.*

No, the effects of passion or reason (for I do not know which of them inspires me at this moment) are incredible! After waiting for the postman with the need, the agitation, which make waiting the greatest of torments—it made me physically ill; it brought on my coughing and my raging head-ache five or six hours earlier—; well, after this violent condition which is susceptible of neither distraction, nor soothing, the postman came: I saw there were letters, but none from you. This gave me a violent shock both within me and

[1] M. de Guibert was at this time at Courcelles, with the family, and the thought alone threw Mlle de Lespinasse into the state of exasperation shown in these letters. [V-G.]

without, and then I know not what happened, but I felt calmer ; I seem to feel a kind of pleasure in finding you even colder and more indifferent than you can possibly fine me extraordinary.

By proving to myself that I am nothing to you, I think it will be easier to detach myself from you ; it has been so clearly demonstrated to me that you can do nothing but cause me misery every moment of my life, that everything which gives me the strength to go away from you, to separate myself from you, is really the greatest consolation I can feel. Here I am longing for you to be kept by taste or compulsion in the place you are in : your absence ceases to be an evil to me, it is a rest.

I see you intoxicated by the praises and flatteries in which they enwrap you all day. That might be sufficient for your vanity, but your activity needs an answer from M. de Saint-Germain which might satisfy both your vanity and your ambition at the same time. That is the letter you are waiting for, that is the one which your heart needs.

Letter 182

to the same

Monday, 3.0 *p.m.*, 20 *November*, 1775.

My friend, how lovable you are, and how fully you justify my excessive folly, and misery ! Yes, I believe that all I have suffered, all I expect—nothing could be strong enough to hinder me and protect me from loving you, if I did not love you. There are things which make me believe in Fate : I was destined to live for you for a moment, I was destined to die as a

result. But my friend, I have loved you, I complain no more.

So let me endure my destiny, and take care not to put the finishing touch to my woes by making me love life at the very moment when I ought to leave it, when I feel it slipping away from me. Alas! my friend, in kindness, in pity, let me believe that death will deliver me from a burden which crushes me; let my thoughts find rest in contemplating that moment so much desired, so long awaited, and of which I feel the approach with a kind of transport, when I think of the sentence you pronounced on May 1st.[1] But also while I was listening to you yesterday, while you were in my sight, my heart melted at the thought that I should soon bid you farewell for ever; I pinched myself, I should have liked not to think myself so ill, I regretted that I could no longer hope. In short, my friend, my tenderness for you filled my heart, and would not allow me to form a desire of which the object could be separation from you. In that awful respect death will be an evil, a great evil!

Heavens, you will never know the state of collapse, the kind of death and anguish in which I have passed the last three weeks. It is not the loss of strength, nor my emaciation, nor the extreme change in me, which is extraordinary; but the unheard of thing is that my life resisted such torture. But at last you came; I found you once more full of kindness and sensibility; you calmed my mind, you poured balm into my blood. That night suffering was less painful; I did not sleep, I was feverish, I coughed; but really I was not unhappy for my thoughts were sweetly and affectionately busied

[1] One more date in the history of this liaison is established by this passage, hitherto unpublished. It was on 1 May, 1775, that M. de Guibert signed his marriage contract. We know that it took place on the 1st June following. [V-G.]

with you. I thought that I would write to you, and I dared not hope to receive news of you, but still that did not seem impossible to me.

Judge of my feeling of happiness, when as I entered my room, they said to me: "from M. de Guibert." My friend, the words gave me strength for my day; I am no longer afraid of fever when I have your letter, the remedy has more power over me than the disease. I will drive out of my thoughts the thing which ceaselessly strives to come into them: *he reached Paris on Saturday at* 5.0, *and he waited till* 1.0 *on Sunday to find out whether I was dead, ill, or in the depths of misery.*

Oh! my friend, had you forgotten, then, that I loved you, and did you no longer remember *how* I love, with all the faculties of my soul and my brain, with the very air I breathe? In short, I love as I live, and I live only by what I love.

My friend, kill me if you like, but I will repeat with all my might that the recital is at least ten lines too long. And then am I wrong, or does not the death of *Adelaide* very much resemble *Tancred's*? I quite realise that they do not say the same things, but is there not some reminiscence in your mind?

I am dying of longing to know what M. de Saint-Germain has said to you; I have thought over his letter again; it is good, very good; and I have no doubt you will be pleased with the way in which he behaves towards you. Remember to bring me the draft of the letter you have written him.

If I do not see you in the morning to-morrow, Tuesday, send me a line, for I have no doubt you will not come back this evening. If you do not come in the morning, and cannot give me your evening, you must know that from 4.0 to 5.30 I am alone; so there are three ways of seeing me in perfect freedom. Do take one of them, my friend, for I need to see you.

Good-bye ; you see that I am giving myself a compensation. Oh ! Heavens, I have suffered so much from keeping silence. My friend, do you think that there is, or ever has been, anyone in the world more deeply smitten by your attractions, and more profoundly interested in you ? Do you think that there is a degree of tenderness and passion higher than that by which I am inspired ? The beating of my heart, the throbbing of my pulse, my breathing—all is only the effect of my passion : it is more clearly marked, more pronounced, than ever ; not that it is stronger, but because it is about to be extinguished, like the light which springs into vivid life before going out for ever.

Good-bye, my friend, I love you.

Letter 183

to mlle de lespinasse

Versailles, 8.0 *p.m.*, 1775.

My friend, I thank you ; I have your letter ; I have read and re-read it. The first thing I did at 7.0 this evening was to go to Touchet's, to find out whether it had come—and there it was. This action answers some of the reproaches in your letter. It is, besides, so delightful that it is easy to forgive it those slight defects. There reign in it a sweetness, a tender melancholy, which touch the depths of my heart. Yes, my friend, our hearts meet more often than you think; only I do not always tell you so. I imagine that you know it, and I am wrong, for you seem to be always doubting it.

I spent an hour with M. de Saint-Germain. Things are not going well : he is weakening, he is giving in to the suggestions people make to him. The cabinet has

already spoiled him. Where then is one to find a man? I showed him the truth till he was tired of it. He gave me another appointment for to-morrow; I shall show him the truth again, and if he is displeased at it, I shall *go back to the army*. He ought to have had as much courage, and gone back to Alsace; then the Light Horse and the Gendarmes would not have stayed; the Guards would have been better re-organised; then good would have happened because he would have made himself master. He deals carefully with M. de Maurepas; after this final folly, what can you hope for? Good-bye. I do not know what M. de Tingry will say to you. *I* treat him lightly! I am going to call on him. I am annoyed at leaving you. I will write again to-morrow morning, for I am afraid I cannot leave here early.

Pity me; this life is excessively distasteful to me. But it will not last; another meeting like to-day's, and I shall gradually move away. I do not want to take a part in anything petty or feeble. Enough people will help M. de Saint-Germain to do that, without my being mixed up in it.

Good-night, my friend.

Letter 184

to M. de Guibert

Tuesday, 21 *November*, 1775, 3 *o'clock*.

You amiable, good, charming, excellent, and most beloved of all creatures, it is neither your fault, nor mine, my friend, if you did not have news of me at Versailles. I received your note this morning at 11.0; there was no time left, and as I imagine that you will go home before you come to see me, I hasten to thank

you for your attentions which were so amiable and full of kindness.

Your interest touches me so deeply, that I am distressed that I cannot content it by telling you that I am better; but it is impossible—I coughed myself to death yesterday; I had so severe an attack of fever last night that my thoughts were even more tangled and wandering than ever, and this morning at 11.0 I saw my doctor who found that I was more feverish than I usually am at that hour. It is a fever caused by irritation; my chest and my stomach are even more inflamed and upset than my mind.

But, my friend, I love you, and if you reciprocate it I shall have a martyr's courage; I shall suffer, but I shall prefer my ills to the happiness of anyone in the world.

I have just had a very friendly note from the archbishop of Toulouse, but he disturbs me, though he is not disturbed himself, at least to judge by what he says: he spat blood yesterday. Bordeu says it comes from the throat; but is it natural to spit blood, especially when one is feeding on nothing but milk, and when one is taking ass's milk twice a day? I am afraid it will end badly.

Heavens, how far it is from what I love, from what interests me, from what disturbs me even—how far from all that to you! Oh! my friend, keep well; do not torment me any more; do not hurt me any more; but also do not go to the opposite extreme, do not make me believe that my life is necessary to you; I should be too much to be pitied, for I feel the need of death.

Good-bye, my friend; I wrote you a volume yesterday.

I am longing to know whether you are pleased with M. de Saint-Germain; I hope and believe so.

Come to me, come to me. You have more power over me than *Logistile* had over *Roland*, than opium has over pain, and I honestly believe that you would be stronger than death.

Everyone, everyone, who has a little taste and intelligence, is at La Chevrette.

Letter 185

TO THE SAME

Friday, 11.30 *p.m.*, *November*, 1775.

No M. de Guibert, but also no letter from him. It is a great void. My friend, I love you, without a doubt, a thousand times better than *Berenice* loved *Titus*, but unfortunately I cannot make the same use of my time: I could not spend the whole of it in waiting for you—a remark not irrelevant.

For instance, the hope of seeing you this evening has made me show one of my friends the door; this hurt me even while I hoped for you, and at this moment it worries me, for even friends leave one very quickly. People have so much to do and so many amusements, that much goodness of heart is needed to make them give up evenings to me.

You are going to have a bad opinion of me: I should not be anxious or sorry, if I had driven away the one who loves me; he is in fact sufficiently interested in me to forgive, and not to take a refusal as a snub. But M. d'Anlezi is not in that state; when he has twice repeated "*one cannot see her any more*," he will submit to it as to something necessary. Still, how could I have him there, when I am expecting you? The number three was not even a success in the Trinity: it is either too many or too few. So the clear moral of

all this is not to make me share your doubts ; they torment my mind, and would even leave my evenings too solitary.

Do you know that for three hours I was much alarmed about M. de Saint-Germain's condition ? They said he was *bad*, that they feared a hæmorrhage, and the thought made me shudder. " Is France then smitten by a curse ? " I said to myself. And then you, your interest, all that disturbed me, and I fell silent. At 7.0, a pretty woman was announced. " Would you like to hear news of M. de Saint-Germain ? Yes, indeed, I had word at 7.0 this morning ; it was good news ; but I have given orders that I am to be brought word of his state at 5.0, which I should hear at 8.0."

My pretty visitor quite calmed me, and I no longer needed her letter, which came, however, as she had said ; it was dated from M. de Saint-Germain's room, and was so reassuring that I am sure you will have been able to work with him. Heaven, I hope so, for when one is not really minister there is very little to compensate for the loss of one's liberty. One can hardly bring oneself to make that sacrifice for fortune and for love, and, in truth, one is quite right : the idea of chains, were they of gold, revolts my mind.

Good-night. I have suffered, I know nothing now but pain, and yet you say that I must cling to life. That does not seem very consistent.

Saturday, 11.0 *a.m.*

I have your letter, my friend. I thank you for not leaving me longer in uncertainty. I am still uncertain about your return, and that is quite enough, for you tell me with no mark of eagerness that you will see me to-day. Altogether, the note is a little cold, but it is a proof of kindness and attention; so I must be grateful for it.

Good-bye, my friend. I shall send this letter to your house so that you may get it when you arrive, and I hope that if I do not see you this evening, I shall have news of you early to-morrow. Write to me as you get up, or before you go to bed.

Letter 186

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Tuesday morning, 1775.

Well, my friend, you will always be the same : hardly have I found you again than I lose you. I am the first among the ambitious, or rather the last ; for you know well that I think there is nothing so insipid as an ambitious person in a crowd. I only excuse ambition when it is great, and mine cannot be of that sort. So do not humble me by that accusation, it misses the mark.

I was very much yours when I was at your house yesterday ; I should have been so more completely if I had been able to talk to you at my ease ; but you were surrounded with people. I at least enjoyed the sight of your face, which seemed better. I left you against my will ; I was in a hurry to go home and work, and above all to write to the baron de Wimpffen whom I wanted to see, in order to get his help in preventing M. de Saint-Germain from ruining himself. For he is ruining himself, he is dishonouring himself by the absurd order which is going to come out about the carabineers. I was furious at all I had just heard at that dinner. Oh ! my friend, there will never be a *man* in office, then, and the Ministry strangles everyone who promises to become one.

The baron de Wimpffen has sent me word that he would come this morning. Here he is ; I leave you. I am going to tell your little footman to wait.

He is leaving. He is as angry as I am. I have written a fiery letter to M. de Saint-Germain ; he will never have heard the truth so frankly and so forcibly put. The Baron has promised me that he would write too. But that is enough about the Ministry. I love you, my friend. The transition is sharp, but it is the impulse of my heart. I should be very cross if I do not see you to-day ; that accursed visit gets in my way. Oh ! Forget that I shall be near you. I will make up for it to-morrow.

Good-bye, my friend. Do not tell me that it is too late. Love has performed greater miracles and it did not desire them more eagerly.

Letter 187

TO M. DE GUIBERT, RUE DE GRAMMONT

Wednesday, 6.0 a.m., November, 1775.

I CANNOT say my first thoughts are of you, for I have not yet slept ; but my thoughts are full of you, and I want to tell you that I love you before a few moments' sleep snatch me away from the pleasure of feeling it. My friend, I was very sad when I went to bed ; I had waited a long time for you, and the hope had animated and sustained my mind. But when the hour for hope had passed, I fell very low, for my body was greatly exhausted. There were people round me, but I could not have been more alone in a desert. " Oh ! Heavens ! " I said, when I heard everyone for whom I was not waiting announced, " everyone whom one does not want arrives, is punctual, assiduous." It is dreadful

only to live on a single point, to have only one object, one wish, one thought.

My friend, the feeling that gives one is certainly not a remedy for fever ; but still I have much less than last night ; I have neither the thirst, nor the heat, nor the kind of delirium. Imagine that I found it impossible to think of you, my affection slipped from me like everything else, and this lack of power over my thoughts increased the heat and my distress. At the moment I am calm, I suffer, but in an endurable way.

Are you in Paris, my friend ? Shall I see you this morning ? Heavens ! I wish you the best, the greatest, fortune, every success ; but how wretched it is to have attached oneself to someone whom everything separates from one. If M. de Saint-Germain employs you, you will be constantly at Versailles ; the representations of the play will bring you there constantly ; and then a wife, a family, tastes, amusements !

My friend, I complain of nothing, but, honestly, tell me whether I could live when all this is against me ? Whatever you did for me would cost you much, and what you did not do would put me to torture. It is far better to say and do what the wife of *Poetus* did : *I do not weep, but I die.*

I do not know whether it is a result of the fever, but for quite a long time my head has been worn out and overflowing with tears. They are no longer there : that species of comfort is no more any use to my grief.

But, my friend, I want to speak of you. You must have arrived very late, for I should certainly have heard someone speak of you to-day if you came at 5.0. But at any rate you had received two letters from me, and on Saturday you did not know whether I was dead or not ; one can understand that such an uncertainty leaves one quite calm. If you only knew another thing

I have found out against you ! But, so as not to make myself hateful, I must conceal from you the suffering your thoughtlessness causes me ; yes, I must use all the strength I have left in hiding from you the harm you do me.

Good-bye, my friend. I am impolitic to tell you that I have something to scold you for, you will come with the less pleasure ; for my part, I assure you that I shall not have less at seeing you. Alas ! you could with impunity wish to assassinate me, to have me assassinated, so you see whether my weakness leaves room for any resentment ! I love you.

Letter 188

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Wednesday morning, 1775 (*December*).

My friend, it grieves me much, but I shall not be able to come and dine with you to-day, I refused Mme Geoffrin yesterday, and I will not tell you it is because I am busy, or because I want to stay at home and work. . . . It is because I shall go to dinner with madame de M . . . whom I have not seen for some days, and at whose house I have not dined once since her return. Your sense of justice will forgive me, above all as you know that I shall regret an opportunity of spending some hours with you, although it is the public I see at those dinners rather than you.

Yesterday, however, my friend, in the midst of those seven or eight people, I felt pleasure ; I was near you. You were very animated, alive, amiable. This deludes me as to your sufferings, it allows my heart to breathe by letting it admit the hope of keeping you thus. But

hardly has my thought let itself lay hold of this sweetness, than you tear it from me. You suffered yesterday evening; you were suffering greatly at the time you wrote to me.

After you left, I went to M. de Vaines', and had two hours' conversation with him. We shall have much difficulty in doing any good. The disorder of the other parts of the administration puts innumerable obstacles in our way. "What then" I said to M. de Vaines, "because you are drowning, because you take no decision, we must perish? What loathsome red-tape!"

So you think that the comte de Saint-Germain does not tell me everything? So much the worse for him, if he is deceiving me. His business will go badly, and he will pay for the error of dividing his confidence. Judge as your conscience tells you, and according to your heart. I shall this week hand him a general sketch of the new plan of military organisation, and if I see that he lacks courage, I shall retire. One must not co-operate in a bad piece of work, and everything that is not on a large scale is bad in my eyes.

The *Constable* is postponed until Saturday week,[1] and as a result the rehearsals are altered. The names you send me will be registered in due time. I learn of this postponement of the *Constable* from the maréchal de Duras; it is because of the ballet of *Medea* which requires much preparation, and because of the anniversary of the Dauphin's death.

He tells me, at the same time, that in view of the large number of applicants he will only be able to give me fifteen stalls, instead of the twenty-three he had promised me. This annoys me a great deal; I had made definite promises. I should be in despair if

[1] The *Constable of Bourbon* was played for the second time in the theatre of the court at Versailles, on 30th December, 1775. [V-G.]

M. de Tingry also failed me ; that I shall see to-morrow if I go to Versailles, which I am not sure of, since my work may perhaps not be finished. I shall see you to-day for certain, this evening if I can. I shall ask for your fourth volume again to-day, and will send it to you at madame Geoffrin's. Here are your letters all collected together, and they have been for a week in a case which does not lie about. Shall I not inspire you with more confidence ?

Good-bye, my friend ; I leave you. It is possible that I have sometimes slumbered at your house at 11.0 in the evening, but I sleep much more elsewhere ; I am usually done at that hour. In revenge, your letters animate me ; I should like to be always receiving them, and I never read them once only.

Letter 189

TO M. LE COMTE DE GUIBERT

Wednesday midnight.

My friend, you have not expected me, is it not true ? You have not had time to think of me and it would be both clumsy and silly to reproach myself and make excuses for you :

One must think oneself loved before one can believe oneself faithless.

But really, even with the will and the desire to write to you, I could not have done so. From four o'clock to this very moment, I have not been alone for a minute. Besides, what am I to say, my friend, when you want me to talk about myself ? I can always express my physical and moral condition in two words : I suffer, I love ; and for some time that is the order in which they come.

Yes, I suffer greatly ; I have been feverish, I am feverish and I feel that I shall have a detestable night ; I am already dying of thirst, and my chest and my stomach are burning ; and this too is my bad night. My day has been pretty tolerable ; there was such good company, such excellent conversation, in my room, that I wanted you to be there for yourself, for to me the good, the mediocre and the bad add nothing to the need I feel to see you ; it is the need of my heart, as breathing is of my lungs.

Heavens, how I should like to be able to moderate and extinguish even that need ! It is too active for the weakness of my mechanism, and besides it is more necessary than ever that I should get used to seeing you rarely. Oh ! Heavens ! Everything separates us, my friend, and everything brought me closer to a man who was born three hundred leagues from me. Alas, he was inspired by the emotion which makes one do the impossible. I do not complain, you allow me enough ; one always finds oneself too rich when one is about to change house, or to lose everything.

Well, my friend, have you carried out your plans ? Have you worked hard ? I do not believe a word of it. This is what you will have done : dinner, after dinner talk, at five go to the Temple where you will have read the alterations you have made in the *Constable* ; they will have been lauded to the skies, and in that pleasant flow of words the hours slip away very quickly ; you will have returned home a little before nine, and it is very agreeable to vegetate in the family circle and get oneself worshipped until half-past eleven, midnight : here, I use the art of the painter of Agamemnon, and am silent. . . . Good-night.

I do not know what hour you mean to give me to-morrow, although you have indeed said that it would be the evening ; but so many things pass through

your head, that your plans must never be taken as engagements; in short, my friend, you will give me what you can. But do not come at 4 o'clock; I have told someone to come at that hour, because I rightly judged that it was not the one you would choose.

I reproach myself for keeping you so long; you are surrounded like a minister; but as ministers are apt to mix up the papers they receive, I shall beg you to put together the four sheets you have from me, and to bring them back.

My friend, I thought that you would never descend to sketching a *grove* on M. de Saint Germain's letters.[1] Why? As the ambassador says: "Because we are very vulgar!"

Come, come (without any fear that you will take anything from me, for one cannot fall when one is on the ground). I am going to send my letter to M. le comte, but I declare that I have not a grain of respect for him.

Letter 190

TO M. DE GUIBERT, RUE DE GRAMMONT

Wednesday, 11.0 *p.m.*

I HAVE thought it all out; if you are not happy, very happy, then happiness cannot exist, there can be no such thing in nature; for you are just precisely made to enjoy much and suffer little. Everything

[1] Mlle de Lespinasse here alludes to a rather unusual peculiarity: in one of her earlier letters, dated Friday, 27 October, 1775, on the blank page at the end, by the side of the address, is a pencil sketch representing a garden or a grove with a circular path, a drawing which M. de Guibert had evidently made in an idle moment. This laughing observation of Mlle de Lespinasse would be one more proof, if such were needed, that her letters were always punctually given back to her by M. de Guibert, as she so often asked him to do. [V-G.]

helps you, your defects, your good qualities, your sensibility, your instability. You have tastes, but no passions; you have a mind, but no character. In a word, it seems as if nature had studied to bring together the aptest combinations to make you happy and to make you amiable. You will ask me what is the appositeness of this? Oh! if you do not see it, imagine that my mind is wandering, and you will be right ninety-nine times out of a hundred.

My friend, I hardly hoped for you this evening; still, I had difficulty in tearing myself away from my house, at ten o'clock, to go and spend an hour with M. d'Anlezi at the house of M. de Saint-Chamans, about whose health I was worried.

When shall I see you? How much shall I see of you? Will you have the strength to refuse me three days, you who are so easy-going with everybody? My friend, think what three days are out of all your life, out of bonds which will last for ever; *my* life will be so short, the bonds which unite us are so fragile! Oh, Heavens, I thought they were broken! There is nothing solid, or firmly founded, between us, but misfortune; you have signed the sentence by the sacrifice of your liberty, and by the repose of all the life left to me.

Good-bye. Tell me that, since you have condemned me, you owe me nothing; be cruel if you dare, be virtuous if you can. In short, give me the final blow, and I would still bless you and love you dearly.

The comte de Crillon would like to give you dinner on Friday or Sunday; he is in the country until to-morrow.

Tell me, now that all your desires, all your tastes, are satisfied, to whom are the moments you have left to belong? I only ask you not to throw them out of the window.

My letters, my friend.

I have not had the papers for which Mme Geoffrin is impatiently waiting, ; send them me back at once, I beg you.

Letter 191

TO M. LE COMTE DE GUIBERT, RUE DE GRAMMONT[1]

Sunday, 6 o'clock.

Anything you like, but the epithet *unjust* does not apply. I shall never believe that one commits any injustice by complaining, when one has received a sledge-hammer blow of which one is dying, without having been made unconscious by the blow. No more shall I believe that there is any injustice in feeling wounded and insulted when people tell you, without the least necessity, details and facts humiliating to the one to whom they are told, and which ought to be at least embarrassing to the person who utters them, if he possessed, I do not say a tender heart, but decency and delicacy.

All this said, do not say again that I am unjust, for it is not true ; tell me that I am unhappy, tell me that I am alive, and that I shall die of the ill you do me. That is the truth, and you will see that it will not fail to be proved by the facts.

As to the moment I choose for complaining of a thing that weighs on me, I do not choose it, for I always form a resolution to leave you in ignorance of what offends me ; that would be the only noble and honourable part to take, but at certain moments the hurt is too much for me ; I am weak, I give in, and I am still overwhelmed. In short, what shall I say ? I do not

[1] Unpublished. [V.-G.]

accuse you, but also I do not justify myself, for honestly my conscience does not reproach me at all, at least so far as you are concerned; but I feel that I am very blameworthy and I feel too that I am cruelly punished

I thank you for the interest you show in me; I am coughing my sides out. I have suffered much, and I feel tired to death by all that I have done to-day. I have here one person who is waiting for me, who says I am writing a very long letter, and that it is certainly to some-one to whom the letter will give less pleasure than my conversation would give him. That, no doubt, is very true, but I wanted to answer you, although it has been clearly proved to me that you never read a letter of mine right through.

Good-night.

Letter 192

TO THE SAME

Thursday, 11.0 *p.m.*, *December*, 1775.

I have not seen you. My friend, *I love you;* when shall I see you? That is the result of the past, the present and the future, if there is a future. Oh! my friend, how I have suffered, how I suffer! My woes are dreadful, but I feel that I love you.

The comte de Crillon has brought news from Versailles that M. de Saint-Germain was confined to his bed with a heavy cold. If you were not to see him, I should much regret your journey. Good-bye, my friend. If this was the last, I could not utter it more tenderly and more regretfully. But forgive me, you do not want me to speak either of my ills or my hope.

Letter 193

TO THE SAME

Friday evening, December, 1775.

Is it true that the fate of the King's household is to be decided and made public this evening ? Are you still as pleased as you were ? Has not your enthusiasm cooled off! Have you nothing to deduct from all the good you hoped for and desired ? In short, my friend, are you pleased ? Have you made definite arrangements about the *Constable* ? Have you got your boxes, your tickets ? Is the rehearsal still fixed for to-morrow morning ? Will you, in the midst of so much business, find a moment to give to me ?

The answer to that question is not the one which interests me least ; I need to see you, my mind is drooping : it is, I think, the state which the devout call a time of drought, and which nothing less than the love of God can make endurable. Imagine, my friend, that the most lively interest of my day has been an excellent dinner, which I left tormented with remorse and filled with regret for having been at once too weak and too strong. Do you not know the pleasure of eating when pushed to the extremes of passion ? Well, that is my condition for the last twelve or fifteen days, and the doctors, who are ignoramuses or barbarians, declare that it is a bad symptom for my chest. If I could allay my cough, I should not take much notice of their predictions.

My friend, I saw none but clever people at that dinner : they were as curious as wild animals. Even the ambassador became a bore. Just imagine what it is to come and read Italian poetry for an hour on end. But in any case, if they bored me, I fully repaid their tiresomeness ; I did not stop coughing.

Good-night, my friend. I remember that I love you, but I do not feel it.

By the way, it is quite true that I must look for a lodging; I learned this morning that I should not be able to keep this one as long as I liked. Will you look out then at your door?

Letter 194

to mlle de lespinasse

Friday, 9.0 a.m., December, 1775.

Your note of yesterday evening would have comforted me, my friend, if the despairing tone which reigned in it had not alarmed me still more. You distress me, you fill my mind with the most painful and grievous emotion that can exist. I love you, your life is dear to me, it is more than dear to me, it is necessary to me, and that does not calm you; you will die and you are killing me. Has the heavenly creature who came to see you yesterday before 4.0, done you more good than I could have? Oh! I should not be jealous, because the preservation of the person one loves is the chiefest good, and one sees nothing else when that is at stake.

I should like this divine person to interest you, animate you, give you fresh interest in life. I want you to live: that is all my longing. I shall have no fear but that then the tenderness and constancy of my affection will become a consolation and a pleasure to you.

Pity me; I shall do none of the things I want to do to-day. I am going to see the archbishop of Toulouse, and from there to Versailles. M. de Saint-Germain wrote to me yesterday evening to go there.

Letter 195

TO M. LE COMTE DE GUIBERT

Sunday, 7 o'clock, December, 1775.

Yes, you shall have a line, but only a line; I have people here. As for you, you are paying calls, all that is vastly interesting, one must admit. Oh! If one loved, how stupid it would all be! But everything is excellent, when everything goes ill.

As to the lodging, I have only until Wednesday morning to make up my mind; so your kindness and your good offices have only that much time to spare.

I shall not go out to-morrow until nine in the evening: I am dining at home. I have not seen the Baron; instead, I spent an hour and a half by the bedside of a charming creature; you can imagine what charm she has for me, since it does not bore me to be alone with her. You must have seen that I find it impossible to lie. As to keeping someone's secret, that seems impossible to me in a different way; I know quite well that one often fails in morality, but one must have a distraction or an interest; otherwise one would be doing harm to no purpose at all. Good-night. Last week, I could have dined three times with you, and you did not wish it. I could see you every day, for the ambassador, and MM. de Schomberg, d'Anlezi, etc. etc., live as far away as you; but they were not interested in so many things, or so many people; but they do not wear chains which they have themselves chosen, and as a result, they often lay them down; but they are right and you are wrong. I should be wrong, too, if I forgot to write to you.

Now remember to have all the lists put down for Tuesday's rehearsal; add to them monsieur and madame la baronne de Boeuil.

But, good Heavens, do not worry any more about my health! Your interest touches me deeply, but I am afraid it will cause you suffering.

Letter 196

TO M. DE GUIBERT, RUE DE GRAMMONT

Tuesday, 5.0 *a.m.*, *December*, 1775.

I could not sleep; my stomach, my head, my mind, all keep me awake and torment me in their different ways. To charm away my ills, I want to talk to you.

You can quite see, my friend, that I cannot, that I can never again, go and dine with M. Boutin. I have told you that I wrote to him to excuse myself, and truly it would be beyond my power; except you, I could neither listen nor talk to anyone. I have been so upset I am still so worried, that I could only feel comfortable with that afflicted family; I suffer and feel with it.

My friend, my heart is full of tears, and those which I shed are not only on account of M. de Saint-Chamans. Oh! how close you are to everything which inspires my heart. It is you, always you, whatever the form, whatever the manner in which I express a painful emotion. My regrets, my fears, my remorse, all are full of you: and how could it be otherwise? I exist only by you and for you. Oh! Heavens! you say that I reject and repulse everything that you do for me; explain then what it is that attaches me, that chains me, to a life of pain which I ought to have left at the moment when I lost one who had made me learn all the value of it, who had made me cherish it. What was it that restrained me then? Who is it that restrains me now, as he tears my heart in pieces?

You know as well as I do whether I love you ; you know that when I tell you that I hate you, I am still proving that I love you : my silence, my coolness, my wrong-doings, all prove to you that there does not exist in the world a tenderer or a stronger passion. Heavens, how it is striven against ! How it is detested. And it is always more powerful than my will and my reason.

My friend, send and excuse yourself quickly from this dinner of M. Boutin's. You know he lives in the *Rue Richelieu, near the Rue de Menars.* Keep your kindly feeling towards me until to-morrow at Mme Geoffrin's ; I hope I shall be able to go, if we have news to-day.

I received your letter from Versailles as I came in ; it arrived at midnight. I have not sufficiently told you how touched I was by your sympathetic kindness. Good-morning, or good-night, my friend, for I am about to begin my night. It is far pleasanter to talk to you than to sleep ; but if I am to love you, and to suffer yet a little time, I must have sleep ; for, to love, one must live, and it is very certain that I only live to love you.

Good-bye, most amiable and beloved of all creatures. That is forgiving : but forgetting ! Oh ! my friend.

Letter 197

TO M. LE COMTE DE GUIBERT, RUE DE GRAMMONT

Midnight, Tuesday, December, 1775.

You are made of ice, you happy people, you society people ! Your hearts are closed against lively and deep impressions ! I am ready to thank Heaven for the misery which overwhelms me and is killing me, since it leaves me the soft sensibility and profound passion which make one accessible to everyone who is suffering, who has known grief, who is tormented by the pleasure

and the misery of love. Yes, my friend, you are happier than I, but I have more pleasure than you.

I have just finished the last volume of the *Paysan Perverti*. Did not the last page delight you? Did you not feel the need to talk to me about it? To read it to me? Heart of ice! That is the happiness, the language of Heaven. And *Manon's* death, and her passion and remorse, and the grief-laden, passionate, words she uses! Heavens, we spent the evening together, the book was there, you had read it and you said not a work about it!

My friend, one little corner of your heart, and much of your conduct, might, without folly or injustice, cause a comparison to be drawn which would not please you. Yes, yes, there is a little of *Edmond* in your constitution; you do not resemble him full-face, but in profile. My friend, that book, that bad book which is lacking in taste, in delicacy, even in good sense, is, if I mistake not, compounded of the remnants of the passion and warmth which inspired Saint-Preux and Julie. There are delicious expressions in it. If these are not the last sparks of thy genius, Jean-Jacques, if these are not the ill-extinguished embers of the passion which inspired thy heart, read this book, I beg, and thy heart will be inspired by interest for the author, who planned and executed the work badly, but is certainly capable of writing a better. I am punishing you, my friend, I am overwhelming you, but you will get out of it, as usual, by not reading it. *Edmond* would have done just the same, and he was less busy than you.

My friend, here is the title, or the synopsis, of a letter which I should have written as *Pierre*, the *Editor*:

Edmond to Manon.

How can one show the same affection for so many different objects?

The world is a dangerous abiding-place for anyone whose heart is made like Edmond's.

You will send me back my book and my letters. You will tell me that you have been more amused than busy this afternoon: the Operas, visits, attentions, manners, the frivolity of society folk, of talent, of genius, the need to have merit. Oh! what an aſtonishing contraſt! And what a dreadful misfortune to have seen at such close quarters a man who is even more dangerous than he is amiable.

My friend, I have been coughing so much as to alarm all those who were round me; I cannot ſtand any more. Truly, you are obliged to love me, you have only a moment left—I feel it.

A box with four seats for some ladies. Three ſtalls. Think of it, and do not despise an attention which obliges one who loves you. I shall not go out; I am feverish, and the coughing never ſtops.

Wednesday, 8.30.

Letter 198

TO M. LE COMTE DE GUIBERT, COLONEL, C/O M. TOUCHET, BATHING-MASTER AT VERSAILLES

Friday, 4 o'clock, December, 1775.

My friend, I am ill, in much pain; but also I am mad; I do not know what has happened to my heart the laſt two days, it is a desert: I find in it neither affection nor passion, but lacerating regrets, a profound grief, aſtonishment that I am ſtill alive, the sensibility and light-headedness of the firſt moments when pitiless death took from me the thing which alone had made me cling to life. Heavens, why did you prevent me from following him? Why did you condemn me to so lingering and painful a death?

Such, my friend, are the thoughts which have filled my life since Tuesday evening. I have been more ill

because of them. I spent a night without going to bed, I have been nowhere to dinner, and, I will confess, the *Constable* has rarely come into my thoughts, and I even believe that, if you had not written to me, I should not have had the strength to show you how sad and worn out I am.

Oh! Heavens, no! I shall not go to Versailles; first, I am too ill, and then I should be on the rack during the performance. I am harder to please than you in matters affecting your interests. Besides, if the play has, as I hope, a great success, I am not anxious to over-excite my mind; it is too tired; it needs nothing but rest and calm. And I declare, too, that it accords neither with my taste nor with my heart, for you to be judged as a dramatic author. To be excused, you would have to surpass Voltaire and Racine; their great talent forces every door and gives a new title to fame. In short, I have told you, for a year you seem to have behaved only in such a way as to hurt the one who loves you, and truly I am thinking only of your own interests in saying so.

They have already sent three times to ask for the ticket for the box: it is a perfect nuisance. I swear that I will never mix myself up in anyone's pleasures. Pleasure is the chief interest of all these people, while I, far from having any scheme to amuse myself feel that death is in my soul.

You have not given me back my letters: in everything, movement is far more necessary to you than action; this sounds very subtle, but think over it and you will see that it is just.

My friend, I thank you for the interest you are showing about my lodgings; Heavens, how I should like to have one in Saint-Sulpice! Oh! the dreadful thing is that I let my misery weigh upon one who loves me. It is not you. You ought to come and dine on Sunday

at the duchesse d'Anville's. I expect news of you this evening, and I flatter myself that the ticket for the box will come too. Forgive me, my friend, for taking up your time, for hindering you, and above all for not having had the strength to conceal my suffering from you.

Sixpence, paid before 9.0, *Friday*.

Letter 199

to the same[1]

Friday, 10.0 *p.m.*, *December*, 1775.

I gave myself the pleasure of doing it! I swear that you could never have spoken better, or more strongly to M. de la Harpe. I treated him as he deserved. There were five or six lookers-on who stood amazed, and in a silence which far from daunting me, gave me more strength.

I will tell you the details, my friend; consider yourself well avenged; never has justice been more vigorously meted out. The good Condorcet, and M. de Saint-Chamans will bear me witness if necessary; anything you could add would take from M. de la Harpe's crime. We will talk of it, but calm yourself, you are avenged, and the one who is punished repents from the bottom of his heart.[2]

[1] Unpublished. [V-G.]

[2] M. de la Harpe, who cannot be denied great talents and an established reputation in science, criticism and literature, was, as is well-known, as vain as could be. He did not like Mlle de Lespinasse, who cordially returned his feelings, and he still more detested Guibert, who, in his eyes had the demerit of not bowing before his claim to superiority. So, in the writings he has left dealing with this period, he never fails to show the ill-will which he felt for M. de Guibert. The scene to which Mlle de Lespinasse alludes here must no doubt have taken place as the result of some remarks made about M. de Guibert by M. de la Harpe, remarks of which we have found no trace elsewhere. [V-G.]

I forgot to tell you to be quick and think about making sure of the box I asked you for ; in addition, I should like four orchestral stalls with a right of entry through the theatre ; please do not forget. I had asked you for the *Mercure*, because I hoped you understood that it was a way of telling you to write me a line before you left, but you did not understand, and how could you have answered my thought ? You were not with me this morning, though you were in my room. You were delighted to see someone come in, and that deprived me of power to keep you. My friend, was it your business or your affections which took you away so completely from the one who loves you most in the world ? You would treat madame de M . . . better ; and indeed I hope so : I alone must suffer from and by you, because I alone love you enough to love you always.

My friend, I have not coughed once since yesterday ; that is miraculous. Since the prophet Elijah who brought the child of the woman of Samaria back to life by putting his hands on its hands, his eyes on its eyes, his mouth on its mouth, and made himself as little as it, I have seen nothing more like a prodigy than the cessation of my cough ; I do not know what has become of the inflammation in my chest ; though there are no longer any prophets, still there are miracles, and that is quite enough—

Will you remember that you promised to write to me when you left M. de Saint-Germain, and will you take the necessary trouble to see that the letter goes, and that it reaches me ?

My friend, I have made a new acquaintance to-day: the most charming woman I have seen in my life. If I had to live again, and was given the choice of whatever face, carriage, style, and, in short, whatever general appearance I should like to have, I should say without

hesitation and without thinking of all that has been praised, celebrated and vaunted since women have existed—I should say : give me the face and the charm of this woman ; but only on condition that she loses nothing by it ; for such is the interest she inspires. Yes, I am attracted by her, and, if she wished, I would love her to desperation for the few moments which remain to me. But, as is right, she will have better things to do.

My friend, if that woman was your wife, she would kill me, or else I should adore her, for she is unaffected, modest, natural ; I saw her for the first time this afternoon, and I seem to have known her always, so easy was it to talk to her. We were almost alone, and were perfectly comfortable ; while I listened to her and looked at her, I said : Oh ! why is not she madame de Châtillon ? But I am quite crazy, and you are now prejudiced against the most amiable and fascinating creature that nature ever made. I shall take good care, too, not to tell you her name ; I want you to recognise her, if you meet her at my house.

My friend, you would not have time to listen to me saying that I love you, and I am stupid enough to tell you about an impulse which will displease you, because you will think it extravagant. Alas ! Do the sick and the unhappy understand moderation ? But do not reproach me for having recaptured a spark of the fire which used to animate me formerly ! It is this lively appreciation of the attractions of others which used to make them think I was amiable ; for a long time now I have taken the languidness of death into society ; you are the only person who can make me feel that I am alive, whether it be by pleasure or by pain. I am a little feverish, but am much better. Good-night.

The pleasure which this woman has given me has

not prevented me from thinking that you were very near me this afternoon ; assuredly I should have come to see you if I had been in your place, but what a difference !

Letter 200

TO THE SAME[1]

Wednesday, after midnight, December, 1775.

You want news of me, my dear *Edmond* ? But is it quite certain that it is my letter you are waiting for ? Are you fortunate enough to be inspired with an emotion lively and distinctive enough for your thoughts and desires to dwell upon a single object ? Naturally, without claiming or deserving it, I ought to be preferred, because I think attention re-awakens when people part from each other : attentions no longer matter ; and that is why almost all the dying are loved and wept for. Assuredly the living and the dead are not in the same position.

My friend, however it may be, you want me to write, and I do so. It is, in truth, asking for an achievement : I am worn out, both by the horrible weariness of a cough which has lasted thirty hours, and from the effects of three or four grains of opium. Taken in such doses, it calms me in the same way as the Medusa's head did : I am petrified, motionless ; I have the use of none of my faculties ; what I see is no more than a magic lantern, and so true is this that for two hours this afternoon I should have found it impossible to put a name to the faces. It is an extraordinary condition to be dead while one is quite alive ! I remembered quite clearly that I was in pain ; I knew

[1] Unpublished.

perfectly that it was you who had hurt me ; but, my friend, I felt a degree of generosity even greater than that of the scape-goat ; I no longer knew that there were wicked people, and that the good had to make sacrifices and to give themselves as victims ; still less did I know that there are honourable people who oppress and cause the death of those who love them ; I had forgotten all that : is not opium of more value than reason ?

My friend, I feel so exhausted, my spirits and my strength are so worn out, that my life seems to hang only on your presence. Yes, I believe that if you had prolonged your journey for a month that would have been the end of me, I should have faded out. Why did you come back ? Or why could not you have had enough kindness and compassion to arrange an absence which would put an end to a struggle which consumes me and makes my life one long agony.

Yes, my dear *Edmond*, I still feel all the trouble, all the annoyance, all the pain which attach to a deep affection and an impossible situation, and I feel every moment that my heart is becoming inaccessible to pleasure.

Yes, my friend, I await you, I want you, my heart and my thoughts follow you, you arrive and often my heart stays cold, physical suffering takes up all my attention ; I should like to be all yours, and they are stronger than you or I. Oh ! what a horrible thing is the decomposition of one's mechanism.

My friend, I hope you will read my letter, so I tell you in advance, long in advance, to have put down at the doors of the *Comédie Française*, for the rehearsal on Sunday, the name of madame *Le Droit*, and to have a box booked for her. You will also write the name of the abbé Mileau ; and then, my box and my three orchestra stalls. Busy-bodies were quite right : the

Constable tires me to death, and I shall give many thanks to heaven when your people have arrived. Heavens, what fine things there are in the part of *Adelaide*! What a cruel night her life made me pass! And all those people will take their supper as usual! What fools are people who have only intelligence, and how detestable those who have it not!

My friend, when shall I have a letter? When shall I hear of your return? You will find me in my bed; I shall be bled in my foot when there is no more opium left in my blood.

Have I told you some very hard truths? You were right not to be annoyed at them, but you are not right to disbelieve me in everything, and I swear that it is not presumption which makes me cross. To my mind you give yourself up to doing many ordinary things, very petty things, things which give some occupation to the idleness of society folk, and which will for some time cast a veil over your worth. If the circus giant had adopted the ways of the dwarf, people would have laughed at him, looked at him, looked round, and then said: "But *is* this the giant? In becoming a pygmy he has made himself ridiculous; but still one must agree that this folly has not deprived him of his height and his strength."

As for the application, my *Edmond*, I shall not give you, as did the charming madame Parangon, sermons on theology and immortality: I am very pleased with your religion: I profess the same one, you are my apostle and my God; but I should like my friend who is so superior to other men in so many ways, not to think himself obliged to adopt the follies and the frivolities which are the whole merit of mediocrity, but form a very shabby embroidery for merit and talent.

Do not imagine that I am making a mistake: you have not sent me back my letters, because quite

genuinely you did not know where to find them. What carelessness! What thoughtlessness! I assure you that you are younger than your age, and in certain respects you will not grow an inch taller in sixty years time.

Good-bye and good-morning, my friend, for it is full day.

Letter 201

to the same

Thursday, 11.0 *p.m.*, *December*, 1775.

Well, my father! You are killing me; you were less cruel yesterday. Oh! Let me get well or die. Do not justify yourself No, my friend, if you are not dead, if you have not saved someone's life, there is no excuse for you. Oh! Heavens! I am dying, my mind has no longer possession of itself; you excited it this morning and you desert me! My friend, I foresee that you will one day compel me to cause you a great grief; alas, perhaps it will relieve you. Oh! what strength the thought gives me! But, my friend, if I deliver you from me, who will deliver you from remorse?

I failed Mme de Saint-Chamans this evening, I kept my friends out. To-morrow I am engaged from mid-day until 2.0; it is an appointment of a fortnight's standing. Good-night. May you sleep and enjoy as much pleasure as you have caused me torture and anguish! No, I do not know how the violence of one's thoughts fails to kill one!

Do not come to-morrow morning.

Letter 202

to the same[1]

Friday, December, 1775.

What should I tell you, indeed? If I said what I think, I should hurt you and I should be sorry for it. Still I can put nothing in the place of the truth; so I must be silent. Mme de M . . . complains; *I* am silent: you must find that more convenient.

You are not happy; you are anxious, worried; ever since I lost hope of being able to do anything to give you happiness and rest, your state of mind is only a grief which wearies my heart. Far from consoling me in my misery, you add torture to it; you make a diversion for my grief by causing me one more bitter, and of a kind I loathe, because vanity always had its share in it, and by provoking my sensibility, it exhausts it.

I shall not enter upon longer explanations; they are useless. I told you the other day that I blame myself far more than you; I ought to have known you, and to have preferred the poison which kills in twenty-four hours to that which you offered me, which will consume my life with regret, remorse and repentance.

If you are to come to the reading to-morrow, you ought not to go to Versailles till Monday. I think that for the business you have there Monday will do as well as Sunday.

Still, as you like.

[1] Unpublished.

Letter 203

TO THE SAME

Tuesday, 11.0 *p.m.*, *December*, 1775.

Since I left you, my friend, I have seen many people, I have heard them talking of what seems most important at the moment ; I listened carefully, because they were people who knew what they were talking about. I have concluded that the stupid, the wretched, human race is very difficult to govern, especially when one would like to make it better and happier. But as a final *result*, I perceived that M. de Saint-Germain did not tell you everything, and I hope that he will keep the secret from you as well as he does from others : I am not speaking at random.

I should very much like you to come and dine with me to-morrow, but I dare not urge you : first, because I prefer what suits you to my own pleasure ; still that is not literally true, but expressions of one's feelings are like flashes of wit and plays on words which must never be pressed or analysed.

Here I recollect that I left a *firstly* in the air, which requires a second reason—and here it is : because, by not urging you, I shall be delighted if you do come, and I spare myself a refusal ; one must take care of oneself when one is as sickly as I am. If you knew how I have coughed ! And by what charming person I have been pitied, cared for, and, truly, interested so much as to give me some diversion from my suffering. Yes, after you, but a long way after you, she is the person who pleases me most in the world ; *understand clearly* that I do not use the word love, or interest ; I am only talking of taste and attraction. I have been an hour alone with her : she knows how to talk about what

she reads, and does not need that resource, she feels and thinks.

My friend, I am dining at the Hôtel de la Rochefoucauld on Thursday ; it would be very nice if it was with you, but Versailles . . . Before you go there, you certainly ought to have entered on the list at the Comédie Française the names I am going to add to this ; and, if possible, you ought to bring back from Versailles the tickets for the box and the three stalls. I realise that my insistence and the importance I attach to a little thing cause you transports of anger or contempt ; my friend, your fault is that you do not insist in anything, big or little.

Ten letters are due to me before your departure. If I do not receive them, for one must use *threats* when prayers are useless, I shall not write you a line for the next month. But, Heavens, I feel what store you must set on my threats and my resolutions ! If you do not think me the most faithless of creatures, you must consider me the weakest and the most loving.

Good-night, my friend. So as to be able to talk to you for a moment, I have just sent away someone who did not doze like you, whom I did not bore as I bore you, but who could not keep my attention, because I wanted to talk to you.

Still, I do not much like writing to you in Paris ; you are in such a hurry, you answer so rarely and so ill, you are so little with me when I am with you, in a word you are so perfectly all that one must be to please and hardly be loved at all, that I am most anxious to try that diet. It is the last resource I have to try, to cure my mind and relieve my chest and my stomach. They give me much pain at this moment.

Have the fourth volume sent back to me.

Letter 204

TO M. LE COMTE DE GUIBERT, C/O TOUCHET, BATHING-MASTER AT VERSAILLES

6d., handed in at 10.0, *Friday.*
Thursday, 11.0 *p.m., December,* 1775.

In spite of my sadness I thoroughly enjoyed receiving an answer at 5.0 to a letter which I wrote to you at 5.0 this morning. That is what makes one like big cities like Paris more than any other place: nothing is forgotten which can be convenient and useful.

You do not tell me to write to you, so my letter runs a little risk of being lost or going astray; but M. Touchet no doubt knows that you have rooms in the Rue de Grammont.

My friend, your advice is indeed excellent, and whether it is dictated to you by sensibility, or by weariness of my woes, I could do nothing better, as you say, than try it. You treat my cough, my thinness, my ruined stomach, my sleeplessness, the inflammation of my bowels, in short, my total wreck, as you would treat the whims of all those fine ladies who cover themselves with feathers, make their heads like pagodas, walk on one heel, in a word, commit all their follies. You suggest that I should cure myself, as you would suggest that they should correct their behaviour.

My friend, you are very young, that is what your advice proves—for I cannot say that you are very cold and very uninterested—if you do not see that I am mortally stricken, and that it is merely a question now of a longer or shorter time. Believe that neither my will nor anything in the world could now have the power to save me; no, the resurrection of M. de Mora, which would be the chief of all blessings to my heart,

could no longer alter my destiny. Oh! If that miracle happened, how dreadful would death be to me! He knew me only when I felt the need, the desire, the pleasure of life.

But, my friend, I blame myself, I reproach myself, I am too weak, I weary you; my woes, and my misery weigh upon your mind. I no longer want you to know what I suffer; if I do not tell you, your feelings will no longer be painfully affected, and you will think that I have followed your advice. You will find me looking better, and, far more important, you will find me less tiresome. Come, I am going to do as *Sosie* did, and reason myself into courage. I do not promise that I will go so far as to be gay, that is more than I can manage. I have coughed less to-day and if my night is the same, I shall put off the bleeding till a last resource.

No, the comte de Crillon was not annoyed with you; he told me frankly that he would have done the same, but if you want to put everything right, dine with him on Sunday; you will give me strength to go out.

Oh! it makes me cross that people are beginning to weaken; one ought to be strong at the moment when one has complete power; if he is afraid, all is lost. So you want to *crush* all the fools and the knaves? My friend, your ambition is still more startling than Alexander's, but it is quite as colossal.

So there is no point of resemblance between M. le comte de Guibert and *Edmond*? How pleasant it would be to find one between you and *Gonsalez*! O my dear Gonsalez, the empire of the world, the riches of Peru could not have tempted your heart, if they were to cause the one you loved the loss of a quarter of an hour's rest.

Good-bye, good-bye, my friend. You are in such a hurry, so busy, that it is a lack of respect to detain you.

How I should like to know whether you are coming back to-morrow! How I should like to see you! How I should like . . . the impossible.

Letter 205

to the same

Tuesday, 6.0 p.m., January, 1776.

During the few days left to me I want you not to be able to spend one without remembering that you are loved to distraction by the most wretched of creatures. Yes, my friend, I love you; I want this bitter truth to pursue you, to disturb your happiness; I want the poison which has preserved my life, which is consuming it, and no doubt will put an end to it, to flood your heart with that painful sensibility which will at least dispose you to regret one who has loved you most tenderly and passionately. Good-bye, my friend, do not love me, since that would be contrary to your duty and to your will, but allow me to love you, and to repeat it a hundred, a thousand, times, yet never in words which fully express my feeling.

My friend, come and dine to-morrow at Mme Geoffrin's. I have so little time to live, that nothing you do for me can be of any consequence for the future. Heavens, the future! How I should pity those who expected it, if they loved you.

But good-bye. I have visitors here. How painful it is to live in society, when one has only a single thought.

Letter 206

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

9.0 *p.m.*, *January*, 1776.

My friend, what an answer ! I found it as I came in, and I shudder at it. The condition in which I left you adds to all the horror and completes my depression. You were as pale as death. In God's name, for pity's sake, if you ever loved me, do not take that second pill. I should not survive you. I, your executioner ? Oh ! does one kill what one loves, what one cannot do without loving ?

You said words which made me tremble : *The unheard-of chill* which you feel in your heart. . . . God, Phaedra uses that expression.

Two words, I beseech you ; I cannot breathe. Oh ! my friend, do you want me to weep tears of blood over yesterday evening ?

Letter 207

TO THE COMTE DE GUIBERT

Wednesday, mid-day, January, 1776.

I do not understand what you mean ; talking of the land-lord, you say : *I have never met anyone so hard to deal with*. In what way ? Why ? I do not understand. But since you are so good as to take the trouble to have the agreement[1] drawn up, I should like it not

[1] The lease here spoken of, which was arranged by M. de Guibert, had to do with a flat in the Rue de Grammont, let by the sieur Bergez. The agreement was signed by Mlle de Lespinasse on 14 January, 1776. Too ill and weak to find courage to change her dwelling, she never occupied this new abode, and died in the one which she had long inhabited in the Rue Saint-Dominique, opposite the convent of Bellechasse, Faubourg Saint-Germain. The possession of it was prolonged from month to month until the end of her life. [V-G.]

to be on Friday; that day, that word, still make me shiver with horror. If it is all the same to you, choose Saturday; or else I will not sign it till Saturday. Forgive me all this bother.

No, I no longer send to your house; I no longer urge you to give me time. I think it is putting compulsion on nature to try to bring us two together. The nature of things, the circumstances, our tastes, our ages, separate us too widely for us to be able to come together; so we must submit to a thing which has even more power than will, or even inclination: *necessity*. You are *married*; your first duty, your first attention, and your greatest pleasure lies in that; so follow them, and reflect that what you can spare from them could not satisfy a heart with any feeling. All divisions are vile, and there may be virtue in yielding, even in giving up. Leave me that bitter resource; let me die with the calmness that honesty and temperate emotions can give.

The weariness and exhaustion of my whole mechanism make me shun the convulsions of passion; I should like to rest, I should like to breathe quietly, I should like to try what the truest feelings and the tenderest friendship can do to console a creature who has for so many years been deep in the grip of pain and misery.

Leave me to all this. You take me away from everything that could console and comfort me. You do me definite harm, and you deprive me of every blessing. Leave me, and give yourself entirely to your tastes, your duties, and your ambition; that is quite enough to fill your life.

No, do not come this evening; you have close at hands a means of recreation and pleasure far more efficacious than that which you come to look for from me. Besides, I stayed in yesterday evening; I

cannot, I will not, go two days without seeing madame de Saint-Chamans, who is ill. To-morrow, if you like, I will see you ; I am dining at the ambassador's, and shall not go out in the evening. To-day, I am going to Mme de Geoffrin's. Good-bye. Of all the people I know, of all the people I love and who love me, you are the person of whom I see least. I do not complain of it, on the contrary I tell myself that it is impossible that it should be otherwise, and I quickly turn my thoughts away from a thing I cannot alter.

I again ask you for my letters. I have a special reason for wanting to have them just now.

Here is your book.

Letter 208

TO M. LE COMTE DE GUIBERT, RUE DE GRAMMONT

Thursday, 11.0 *p.m.*, *January*, 1776.

Good-evening, my friend. How is your spiritual and material mechanism working ? I hope M. le comte de Saint-Germain will have doctored your mind, but I am anxious about your throat and your stomach. For my part, I dragged myself—that is the right word—to the ambassador's ; I had been feverish all night ; I coughed enough to deafen the twenty-four people who were there. I came in, and had such violent convulsions that nothing I had for dinner stayed in my stomach ; I vomited with inexpressible pain. The shock gave me a fever, and far worse than yesterday's. That at least is what my two doctors, d'Anlezi and La Rochefoucauld, who have just left me, decided. I believe them too, and I did not need them to know that I was feverish.

My friend, M. d'Alembert will give you this letter ; he is going to see that difficult gentleman again ; I am quite confused by the trouble you are taking in this

matter. I ask you, however, not to desert me until you have loſt me, that is to say until the agreement is signed. Have the conditions or clauses which I want inserted, brought to you and be pedantic in having everything carried out.

After all these details, I shall nevertheleſs not add, as did the man who loaded his abſent friend with troubles and commiſſions : "*My dear friend, ſhow much exactitude and attention in everything I ask you, for I am much intereſted in things which concern myſelf.*" Honeſtly, I find my chief intereſt neither in myſelf, nor for myſelf. When one has loved, when one has loſt the perſon who loved one, can one keep any intereſt in oneſelf ? Heavens, I have only one intereſt in life, to flee from what hurts me, and conſequently to be delivered from the only evil which crushes the unhappy : *life.*

My friend, I did wrong yeſterday to talk to you about yourſelf, and to let you ſee how deeply my heart was afflicted by the calumnies and injuſtice of which you are the object. I did wrong to prove to you that you would enjoy the chief bleſſing of all, if you had deigned to appreciate it, that of being perfectly loved by a ſenſitive and paſſionate heart. But I am croſs about it, and truly only for your ſake, for I am quite detached from myſelf and my own happineſs ; but I am alſo very croſs at ſeeing you ſo ſenſitive to public opinion, after you had flouted it in ſo ſignal a manner. Have to-day the ſtrength you then had, and you would use it better.

Good-bye. There are things which I ſhould like to wipe out of my memory, to cut out of my life : they are preciſely all thoſe things which I have done for you and you have done againſt me. You told me, with more frankneſs than feeling, that when I ſigned my agreement, I ſhould ſign the *treaty of your happineſs ;* my friend, the man who could ſign my death-warrant

on the 1st of May must no more find happiness with me. If he had possessed character and virtue, he could not have endured me to live after his outrage; and if I had had the honesty, the courage and the dignity which misfortune ought to give to a proud mind, I should have rejected and repulsed it with horror. My gorge rises and I tremble from head to foot at the depths of humiliation into which you have made me fall. Do not take the trouble to come to my house to-morrow morning.

Please, bring me back my letters. Is that asking too much? I only want to escape shame, and to ensure your peace of mind.

Letter 209

TO THE SAME

Friday, January, 1776.

My friend, you are very lovable; when I see you, I can hear and feel no one but you. But, when I am left to myself, I know only the feeling of grief, remorse, regret. Everything that can torment a mind without cutting it adrift—such is the torture to which you condemn me.

If I had news of you, how grateful I should be.

But be off now, you always come too late: *the envoy of the Palatinate*.

Letter 210

TO THE SAME[1]

Monday, midnight, January, 1776.

My friend, the least I can hope is not to be an infinite nuisance to you. The thought is thoroughly consoling,

[1] Unpublished. [V-G.]

when one is writing to a person one loves. Oh! yes, if I lived, I should still have to tear myself away from you; you are quite a Statesman now; you have all the inconveniences of ministers: no more time to give to society, and during the moments you allow to friendship, even when one is intimate one cannot keep your attention, it is taken up by your business pre-occupations.

This remark is not a criticism; your talents, your intelligence, were indeed bound to fill your life; you were too active and not emotional enough to keep within the limits of common life; you would absolutely have to play a part, even if there were no audience.

Heavens, what an error! I had spent my life in detesting ambition and the ambitious; this disposition in me was so true and so deeply rooted that it had saved me from the fascination of an amiable man whom I found attractive; but this taste for business, this need of action, announced a very barren mind and a very great vanity. My friend, I shall certainly not restrain you, but I declare that you will never again have any pleasure except such as the ambitious can taste. No doubt you think that you are led on by the love of doing good; do not be deceived; it is personal interest, the desire not to stay among the crowd. If one puts all this on a higher plane, it is, if you like, a noble pride and your consciousness of your own strength which make you want to tread lightly on the heads of everyone else. Such a career is as good as any other. One is hated, calumniated; that hurts one a little at first, and then one becomes indifferent to hate just as one does to love, one sets oneself above public opinion and calls that "being strong".

Well, all said and done, you are ambitious because nature destined you to be so, and because you assuredly second her efforts with all your might; but do you

know what I hope for ? It is that I shall not be a witness of your glory ; that I shall suffer a little longer because of the road you have taken to attain it, but I feel that I am so well on the way that surely my journey will be ended sooner than yours, and I promise you that once I reach the end, I shall not turn back my head, I shall give thanks to God.

But, my friend, did we make it up, yesterday ? I seemed to be a thousand leagues away from you. That distressed me ; your name had gone to my heart, I thought I was going to feel pleasure, and I saw only a man whose attention was absorbed and who was impatient to leave me. Heavens, and yet you say you love me ! Forget those words, do not utter them, they rouse my feelings too much, and only to make me feel my misery the more.

Good-night, my friend. I shall not see you to-morrow, I perceive. To-day, it was work ; to-morrow, your wife ; and after that, business, Versailles. . . . You are always right, assuredly, but your rightness makes me die in convulsions, whatever care I take to restrain myself. You have not time to answer me, is it not true ?

Oh ! Heavens, why is not another person you ? But it would be too late : that would make me detest the death which is at my heels.

Letter 211

to the same

I am freezing, I am shivering, I am dying of cold, I am bathed in perspiration. You give new life to the part of me which is most sick ; my heart is cold, heavy and

full of grief, and I might say with the mad-woman of Bedlam : *his suffering is enough to burst him.*

My friend, it seems a century since yesterday morning, and I fear that I may not last until this evening ; I shall see you, and so my ills will be assuaged. Heavens, I have no longer strength enough to endure my mind, it is killing me.

Good-bye, my friend, I love you better and more completely than you have ever loved. Yes, I have coughed, I have suffered, but I shall see you. You will be busy from now until this evening, while I shall have but one thought which will make me say unceasingly :

For those who are wretched, how slowly the hours go by.

My friend, see whether you want to dine with me to-morrow or Monday at the comte de Crillon's ; choose your day ; I should prefer Monday, but your wishes will decide me.

Letter 212

to the same

Saturday, 1 *o'clock*, *January*, 1776.

Oh ! if you have any kindness left, pity me. I cannot answer you any more, I am incapable of it, my body and my mind are annihilated.

As for my lease, cancel it, or complete my bondage, as you will. It is all more than indifferent to me.

Heavens, I no longer know myself.

Letter 213

TO THE SAME

9.30, *January*, 1776.

I know that you write charming notes, but you are killing me. I am cold, so cold, that my thermometer is twenty degrees below Réaumur's. This concentrated cold, this perpetual state of torture casts me into a state of such total and complete discouragement that I have not the strength left to desire a better condition. Indeed, what should I desire ? All that is left for me to feel is of no more value than what I am feeling. Oh ! yes, I must finish my annihilation. I do not reject your pity or your generosity ; I should think I was hurting you by refusing them. You must preserve the illusion that you can comfort me ; one would feel that emotion towards an enemy one had crushed.

I have people with me. Before 4.0, I had the person I was waiting for.

Letter 214

TO THE SAME

12.30 *a.m.*, *January*, 1776.

I am only just alone ; so I could not keep your footman waiting. I am so sad, and my thoughts dwell so much on misery, that, however good reason I may have for not believing you, I have no doubt that you are suffering, and your wife ill. She seems to have very delicate health ; that will make her all the more interesting.

I begged M. d'Alembert to go and ask for news of you, because I was afraid I should not have a moment to write to you ; he will tell me whether you are going

to Versailles. I think it will be imprudent, but I have nothing more to say, you will do nothing but what is necessary.

Heavens, it is very late for you to think about my ills; forget the cause of them, do not worry about their consequences; and all this that I ask of you is well within your power, and will be easier for you than looking for great opportunities and great dangers to be undergone for me. No, I will not now owe you any more than the one resource from which you so lightly tore me away.

Letter 215

to the same[1]

11.0 *p.m.*, *January*, 1776.

I have just this moment had your note; it had been left with the porter, I do not know when. I am unfortunate in everything; things which give me pleasure are rare, and things which do me good come so late!

I have not left my bed to-day; I have seen no-one; I was feverish and had a horrible headache when I went to bed yesterday; this morning, I was still more suffering, and the fever was high. My mind is sad, but inactive; I should much like not to wake up to-morrow, but I should not have energy enough to take the necessary steps—I love you, and yet I have caught myself twenty times to-day wishing you would do me harm enough to make me decide to deliver myself from the remorse and regrets which consume me. I die bit by bit, and you make me experience the convulsions and anguish of the death agony.

[1] Unpublished. [V-G.]

Now, is not Ténon a clever man! He told me this morning after feeling my pulse: "Something has happened to you; you have had a disappointment; your mechanism has been upset since yesterday morning. Your illness does not come from yourself, it is outside you; and I am grieved to see", he added, "that doctors and medicine can do nothing, or almost nothing, to relieve you. The opium I have just ordered for your stomach, ought to be applied to your mind."

See what power misery has, my friend! It is about to strike a man who ought to be inured and indifferent to suffering. But I should like you to turn away from it; I should like you to desert me; I should like to go for only two days without my thoughts dwelling on you. I should not complain, I should bless you, I should love you, and you would repair the evil, I dare to say the crime that you committed in keeping me alive. Yes, it is cruelty to let a wretch live for long on the rack; it is kindness and virtue to deal him the final blow.

Take care not to leave your work in order to see me; give me your news, and be sure that of all those who love you, no one demands, or allows herself to desire, as little as I do. Your pleasure, your happiness, and even your amusement come a long way before me, and I assure you of this from the bottom of my heart.

Letter 216

TO M. LE COMTE DE GUIBERT, RUE DE GRAMMONT[1]

Wednesday, 4.0 *o'clock*, *February*, 1776.

I, my friend, am the one who is very unhappy. You are suffering, I am deprived of the most sensible

[1] Unpublished. The address of this letter is in d'Alembert's handwriting. [V-G.]

consolation of my life, the sight of you; and then, when your foot is better, you will have to leave.

But what foolishness not to see the cleverest surgeon at the first moment! With a little attention, you would have been cured in four days. But do at least not be in a hurry, or you would be laid up for a month.

I take milk twice; it passes, but I feel the taste of it all day. That is disagreeable, and is not a mark of an excellent digestion.

Oh! I too would like to be living on that Boulevard,[1] even at the risk of being deafened by the noise; but how can one dream of being transported there, when the distance from my bed to my armchair is too great?

You have no idea of the state of weakness I am in: it is a toil to write to you; my ears are buzzing as if I was about to faint. Good-bye, my friend.

Letter 217

Sunday, very late, February, 1776.

You see, I knew it perfectly! Still the fact that I had told you not to come made it a little doubtful; but the moment led you on, and I am very glad, you will have had pleasure, and I was not bored, and I have not had the discomfort of expecting you; I just make this remark, but do not complain.

I have just seen someone who had been away for two days. My friend, you *are very fond of me*, but you

[1] The new flat, of which Mlle de Lespinasse had just signed the lease, was situated at the corner of the Boulevard and the Rue de Grammont. If she had occupied it, she would have been a close neighbour of M. de Guibert, who lived on the other side of the street almost opposite, in a house belonging to his father-in-law. [V-G.]

did not this morning ask one of the questions with which I have been overwhelmed : Had I been feverish ? Had I slept better ? How many attacks of coughing had I had in the twenty-four hours ? etc., etc., and I saw that each question really required an answer.

My friend, explain to me, if you can, how one can preserve the slightest affection for you, when one is certain, proof positive certain, that what you call your affection is devoid of interest, delicacy, attentions, friendship, in short of all response to a sensitive and loving heart.

Yes, I believe, if you have time, and sometimes think of all that people give you, and the little you allow them, you must greatly pity or greatly despise your dupes. As for me, as you see, I am not a dupe, but am something much worse : I might say to you every moment.

Unable to blind, you have known how to seduce me.

What a curse, oh, God !

Have you had news of M. de Saint-Germain ? M. d'Anlezi arrived this evening from Versailles, where they said he was kept to his bed ; God grant that he may live both for your sake and for France.

Well, who won the day this evening : Madame de M . . . or madame His, or work ? One must be born lucky to have always such an embarrassing wealth of choice. For my part, I declare that that is not my idea of happiness, and if I began life again, that is not the kind I should like : it is much better adapted to please vanity than sensibility ; but everyone is right, and especially you, for you are very pleased with everything, and I compliment you on it from the bottom of my heart.

What will you do to-morrow, my friend ? Not, of course, anything you have said you would do, but what

may please the first or the last woman who comes along, and that is quite fair, for my place is precisely between the two. How grateful I should be to Heaven, if, before I died, I could be exiled from that trio! Really, you would make them die of vexation if you told them the truth: I, old, ugly, bad-tempered, dying, to appear at the side of the most amiable and charming creatures in the land! My friend, your taste is depraved; for your sake I am sorry, for I am going away, but you will stay depraved.

I have had a very delightful, a very real, pleasure: I have embraced M. de Saint-Chamans. He is better, but not yet cured, and his ill-health saddens him, for he would like to live.

The thaw has *brought me back* a great deal; my room has been full of people all day; it gives me neither pleasure nor pain; I have kept silent and coughed less. I have to thank madame de Durtal for a syrup which has served to soothe me to-day and yesterday; for the last three months I had been living on opium; they have made me give it up.

Good-night. You see how I am led on to chatter to you, though I ought to be in bed; this is not reciprocating your anxiety to leave me this morning.

Letter 218

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Monday, 10.0 *a.m.*, *February*, 1776.

So you will insult my affection to the end. It is devoid of attention, interest, delicacy, and all this because I have not followed the example of all the indifferent people, and overwhelmed you with questions about your cough, your appetite, your sleep.

Heavens, how can you fail to know me better? Knowing how to live is not at all in my line, but as for knowing how to *love*, whatever you may say, I will not take lessons from that polished, honey-tongued, cold, fellow whom you had not seen for two days, and who displayed such lively symptoms of passion for you yesterday.

I did not give my evening yesterday either to Mme de M . . . or to Mme His. I stayed at home working till midnight, and was so wrapped up, so immured, in work that when I rang I thought it was only 10.0. My secretary went without his supper, and I had a vile headache.

I am still working, and then I shall go out; I shall go to call on the archbishop of Toulouse whom I have not seen for five or six days; lastly, the thing I am clearest and surest about is that I shall come and spend the evening with you. I have not had yesterday evening's news of M. de Saint-Germain. The baron de Wimpffen wrote to me in the morning that he was pretty well. No fever. That is the main point.

Good-bye, my friend; I leave you. I must. I love you with all my heart.

Letter 219

TO THE COMTE DE GUIBERT[1]

Tuesday, 11.0 *o'clock*, *February*, 1776.

You are gentle, you are temperate. I was charmed by the way in which you took my contradiction; but, my friend, you are easily swayed, very easily, and I am dying of fear lest you should read that piece, which

[1] Unpublished.

certainly is full of beauty, force and loftiness; but if it is talked about, if what you have said and have not said is repeated to M. de Muy, he will be displeased with you; he will think that you have put him in a position to be judged and condemned. If he is a good sort, he will not hurt you; but he will not help you, his friendly feelings towards your father will grow cooler. In short, my friend, one must bring oneself to be wise, when one is not strong; one must not *read* once a thing which one would be glad to *hear* several times.

My friend, you must sacrifice it to me, and not say, as Lulli said to his confessor: *Colas has a copy of it.* You must sacrifice it completely to me, and it will be as sacred to me as the *Constable* and *Catinat.*

I have not seen you again. Heavens, have your visits repaid you for the pleasure and consolation you would have brought to my heart? I needed them; I am sad, worn out, I have been more feverish to-day, because my pains have been sharper. My friend, I was in much suffering yesterday evening, my body and my mind were in convulsions, but you were there! What is the charm, then, which is attached to the misery you cause me?

Good-night. Tell me whether I shall see you. Remember that you promised me to go and dine with the excellent woman[1] whose only hold on life is the pleasure she feels in *forgiving* and *giving.* Yes, I love her with all my heart; that seems to prove to me that I still cherish virtue. My friend, let us love her; she will add to your happiness, and will support me in my misery.

Good-bye.

Why, here is a note from M. de Vaines; is he not the best and most obliging of men?

[1] Mme Geoffrin, with whom Mlle de Lespinasse dined every Wednesday. [V-G.]

Letter 220

TO THE SAME

Friday, February, 1776.

Oh ! Heavens ! You are in error, I am not the one who is necessary to you ! But no matter, since you wish it I will expect you and spend the evening with you ; but truly I am sacrificing my repose to you. I regret it, because it is doing nothing to give you pleasure. There are two kinds of things in nature which cannot endure mediocrity, and you lead me to a temperateness which I loathe and which does not suit my heart.

Oh ! Heavens ! why did I meet you ? I should not have felt remorse, and I should not be still alive. And look what you fill my life and my mind with ! I do not reproach you, for I am too certain that it is not in you to give happiness to a sensitive heart, but I do express my lively regret at the horrible mistake I fell into.

Bring me back madame de Boufflers' letter, and mine.

M. de Vaines will not come this evening ; he stayed yesterday until 11.0. He told me to remind you about Monday, because he did not know where your rooms are. Good-bye. Till this evening, then, but do not come late, please. Bring me M. de Voyer's memorandum.

Letter 221

TO THE SAME

Tuesday, February, 1776.

I am sending M. de La Rochefoucauld away, that I may answer you. Your kindness, your active interest

touch me very deeply ; but, my friend, if the feeling you have for me gives you pain and grief, I must wish to see it grow colder, for it would be dreadful to me to cause you suffering. Oh ! We must both feel the same regret ; the day which brought us together was a very fatal day : why did I not die the day before.

My day has been full of pain, and, an extraordinary thing, of a lassitude which I thought could not go with active suffering.

What a painful pleasure I felt when I saw madame Geoffrin again ! She hurt me ! I saw her end nearer than mine ; I could not master my tears, they overcame me in her presence ; I was in despair. Oh ! The chains which bind me are stronger, they are round my heart, I think I ought to have now only one grief and one regret, and yet I often find my mind once more quickened by affections and interests which torture me.

Heavens, if you continue to be affected by my woes, you will make me find their duration insupportable ! I know you well, my friend : my agony will be an evil for me, and my death a relief. The rapidity of your ideas assures me that you are for ever sheltered from great misery. Oh ! Heavens, all the better, I bless Heaven for it for your sake.

But to-morrow is your Thursday ; be faithful to it. I do not know what I am saying : it will be only Wednesday. Come then, my friend, if you have courage and kindness, for you need them if you are to endure the sight of grief and discouragement.

Good-night. I am going to go to bed, which I ought not to leave again.

Letter 222

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

10.0 *a.m.* (*February*, 1776).

My friend, how did yesterday evening go off ? I asked no reward for it ; I was repaid by my heart. But was it necessary to overwhelm me ? Was it necessary to say nothing but harsh and bitter things to me ? So the details of your will, your death, the dissection of your head, should be indifferent to me ! I am childish, dull, like society people, because I told you all that such thoughts froze me with horror ? Well ! to-day I add that you must lack all delicacy and certainly any kind of affection for me, as you can cause my mind such despair.

But you do not do so, you say, you are sure of it : all my griefs are merely transitory ; even my tears prove nothing ; I have shed them so often ; I shed them so easily ! You almost go so far as to say that they are false. In short, everything proves to me that my presence irritates you instead of relieving you. If I had not come, you would have kept the vicomte de la Rochefoucauld, who "*has intelligence, has that man, much intelligence, who is above all good, exceptionally good.*"

I reproach myself for having hindered you yesterday from enjoying all his qualities and all his virtues. For my part, I have none, I only come to your house with poison and with the secret wish to increase your misery, and triumph in it. And then, your letters—and all the bitter, hateful things you said about them.

Admit it, at the bottom of your thoughts lies hatred of me. You see in me only your persecutor and your executioner. Good God ! While on my side, in the attentions I pay you, there is neither kindness, nor

pity; it is attraction, interest, affection which leads me on; I would pay you these attentions with a thousand times more assiduity and pleasure, if you were well, and had never suffered through me!

My footman will leave this letter at your house. I am going out to see my Councillors and other people about the *Ecole Militaire* and the *Invalides*. I shall come in at mid-day, to dress, and then dine with M. de Trudaine. Do me the favour, at least, of answering me, to tell me how you are. With the definite resolution, which I declare to you, of no more giving you back the letters you may write, I must only expect a bulletin. But I prefer *that*, even were it like those which are distributed to the passers-by, to letters whose whole charm is poisoned by distrust, and which you follow with your eyes and your thoughts until I have restored them to you.

Letter 223

TO M. DE COMTE DE GUIBERT, RUE DE GRAMMONT

Midnight, March, 1776.

I must write to you! Really that is almost as good as telling me I must fly to the moon. My friend, I have given in, and my regret is that I do not do so solely at your request; when they tore that *yes* out of me, they made me burst into tears, and you will forgive me that. But I cannot get over it; why this great eagerness for my life? They all answer that no one has ever loved as well as I have. Oh! Heavens! that merit has been paid for by thirty years of suffering, and then death at the end of it all! I do not know whether that will encourage our be-feathered ladies.

So I shall see *Bordeu* to-morrow at 4.0, for the dagger is at my throat. Do not come at that hour.

Can you be at the ball? Two years ago on the same day and in circumstances if not so sad, at least equally interesting, you went to the ball at the Opera when you left me. Yes, I remember it well, you shed tears during the evening. . . . Fortunate fickleness! I hope you may still have it; for that would prove to me that your stomach is quiet; I have red-hot razors in mine.

I have seen all my list; three of them stayed until half past ten, and I sent them away. I am going to bed, for I had to get up. Good-night, you are very lovable, and if one had not wide experience of you it would be impossible not to let oneself be carried away; such are the attentions you show, such your warmth, so like passion are your tone and expressions—and all employed, good heavens, for whom? For a creature whose prayers death has heard at last, and who expects it every day! So why would you like to make me as inconsistent as the wood-cutter?[1]

Alas! that would be the one thing lacking to complete my awful fate: to go and make me regret what I can no longer preserve or keep.

Good-bye, my friend, let me have news of you.

Letter 224

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Winter, 1776.

My friend, if I can still use the word, never has your condition left so painful and deep an impression on my mind. It pursues me, it fills my thoughts and freezes them with terror. I spoke to you, I fell at your knees,

[1] See La Fontaine, Fables, book 1, 15. [Note by M. Asse.]

I told you that I loved you, and you still lay dead. You gave not a sign of feeling ; you were alive, and yet did not exist : what a horrible mixture !

I shudder when I remember that I have heard that some death-agonies bring people into a similar condidition. Your emaciation is dreadful, it increases every day. But your thinness, your pallor, did not affect me so much as the horrible state of insensitivity into which I see you plunged.

And you can imagine, my friend, whether my terror is great, for it absorbs everything that has to do with me. It is clear that you do not love me any longer ; in other circumstances, the thought would be the most dreadful torture to me ; but you are dying, and you want to die : that is what overwhelms me and leaves no room for any other emotion. What, my friend, you wish to die, and you believe that is my doing ! You want to poison my life with that unendurable remorse ! I shall not bear up beneath its weight.

You did not believe yesterday that I had spent two days at Versailles : ask the Baron de Wimpffen when you see him. It is horrible that my word is no longer enough for you. I must reproach myself for having sometimes offended against truth in my dealings with you, but when I did so, I was never able to keep up the lie properly ; you could see that it was not natural to me, that it was delicacy, and necessity, that made me tell it.

I have not seen you for three days ; I have suffered from that more than you, since you are dead to everything that concerns me, while I am still alive. I hoped to come back every evening from Versailles ; the day before yesterday, too, I had arranged my return so as to be at your house at 9.0, and to alight there. It was horrible weather ; my coachman met with a thousand small accidents and delays, and I did not reach Paris

until half-past ten ; I brought someone with me whom I had to take to his house.

You always judge me with unheard-of severity ; you will not believe that part of my life is taken up by compulsory occupations and visits. I would I could give you the other part. You are the person who disturbs and interests me most ; I love you, and I see you dying. In the name of the affection which is in my heart, which has never ceased to be in it since the day I met you, do not give effect to that barbarous determination.

No, I count neither on the tender friend who writes you such passionate letters, nor on the heavenly creature with whom you fell in love so quickly, nor on the Saint-Chamans, nor on all your friends ; I count on myself, on the attraction which attached you to me from the first moment, and which has already saved your life once. May it save it again ! How happy I shall be ! How much I shall love you ! So there is an extreme of affection which has the power attributed to God, which can kill and bring to life again. I have involuntarily made too much use of the right it gave me over your existence ; let me now enjoy the sweetest charm of love, the power to restore to life an object which misery was causing to renounce it. The greatest miracles in nature are worked in the human heart. Live, and I shall think myself more powerful than Heaven, and, a thing which I value even more, more loved than anyone who is, or has been, alive.

Send me an answer, my friend ; that will relieve you ; it will relieve the tension of your mind. Mine is oppressed by grief and terror. And in spite of my feelings, I must work, I must go to see the archbishop of Toulouse, and then to M. Joly de Fleury's. There is only one place I should like to be in : that in which you are living. Will you leave me that thought ?

Letter 225

TO THE COMTE DE GUIBERT

Wednesday, 11.0 *o'clock*, *March*, 1776.

Why do you think that I am inspired by a horrible feeling? Look more closely: should I have the strength even if I had the inclination? And then I should have to be as dishonourable as I was clumsy to show signs of resentment when I have reached the point when I no longer need defence or vengeance. My friend, I am dying: that satisfies everything, that fills all my thoughts.

But do you know what you should do with the appalling emotion you suppose me to have? Use it as a sedative for your own, to which my danger has given a momentary vigour; you must become cold, harden your heart, flee from a creature who now only spreads sadness and terror round her; in short, you must bring yourself into a state in which, when the event happens, you will feel no ill-effects from it.

That is what my generosity and my interest in your repose make me advise, and I do it from the bottom of my heart. Do not make any moral objections, my friend; one owes nothing more to one who has renounced everything; every bargain, every bond, is broken. You can see it! My heart is impenetrable to any consolation; I hardly dare promise myself a few moments of relief from my physical pains; I think that they are as incurable as those of my heart.

I yielded to the appeals of friendship when I saw Bordeu; before long, the same friendship will lament the uselessness of any remedy. Good-night. I am in much pain; I would that you could not say as much.

Would it be too much trouble to gather together fifteen or eighteen letters you have of mine? The

thought that people may dispose of them often comes back to me and it is painful, however indifferent one may be to public opinion in my present state.

Remember that to-morrow is your Thursday; you are so kind as to forget it; I must remember it. . . .

Letter 226

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

(*March*, 1776.)

My friend, I have just written to you. Our letters crossed. That, more often than you imagine, is the fate of my thoughts; they are constantly forestalling yours. The one is not more full of despair than the other of terror. You were terribly on my mind yesterday; your tears, your looks, so dull but never more expressive, will long haunt me. You scarcely looked at me, or you would have seen that I was almost as upset as you. I suffered from your ills and I wept at your tears. Alas! yes, to-day is that Thursday; I had forgotten it; I had forgotten that some people were coming to supper at my mother-in-law's specially to meet me. I always answer you as if we were the only two people in the world. Indeed, in your present condition, I can see and feel nothing but you. Oh! how one's love redoubles for one whom one is afraid of losing!

It is neither for my pleasure, nor from ambition, that I am going to Versailles; it is the love of what is good that takes me there: my conscience, my gratitude towards an old man who shows me friendship and whose strength I should like to build up. What ambition can one have when one lives in France, and sees what the best brain becomes at sixty!

My friend, I have only one emotion, one thought, one desire, left at this moment : it is that you may live and that my affection may soften the woes of your life. When I think that you will die, and by my fault, morality, duty, inclinations towards anyone else—all vanish. Once more, I see only you, and my need that you should live.

Here is your blue book. I think you have everything that I have written about my journey, except two little note-books which I cannot find. As to your letters, I will bring them to-day.

Good-bye, you do not tell me whether you were feverish when you went to bed.

Letter 227

to M. de Guibert

Friday, 10.30, *March*, 1776.

I could neither read, write, nor dictate at 8.0, when I received your note. I was in the middle of a spasm of coughing and pain which did not allow me to open your letter till an hour later.

This morning, my pain has reached such a point that I am threatened with inflammation ; I have tried everything to get relief, and in this crisis you can see that my doors had to be shut.

The archbishop of Toulouse and two others had come long before you. Oh ! Heavens ! why keep you out ? Because you had not seen me yesterday ? Such impulses and thoughts only come when one believes oneself to be loved, and especially when one hopes for pleasure ; and in my present condition, there is no pleasure left ; I only breathe for some relief.

I have just deprived myself of M. d'Anlezi ; he stayed

with me ; I had not the strength to keep him. He found my fever was pretty high, and it seemed quite natural to him that I should prefer my bed to conversation.

So good-night ; I am going to bed. Do not come to-morrow morning, my doors will be shut until four to everyone. I am no longer mistress of my ills, they have taken possession of me and I give in to them. Do not imagine that I do not wish to see you ; but I die of regret when I think of the wretched way in which you spend the evening here, while elsewhere you are surrounded by every kind of pleasure. No sacrifices, my friend ; the sick are shy of efforts ; they make so little impression on them.

Letter 228

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

(*Winter*, 1776.)

Yes, yesterday at your house I was very near the state of mind and spirit in which the English are when boredom makes then quit life.

I had just arrived from Versailles, I had spent three days there, I had seen the poor Minister succumbing beneath the weight of his work, tired out physically, and even more so morally, disgusted with the obstacles he meets. He told me as he wrung my hand, with a sigh which came from the bottom of his heart, that he would give up everything, if he did not want first to do what good it was in his power to carry out, and satisfy his affection for certain people ; and the number of such people is not great, for he has met with treason and villainy among his close associates : that is what wounds his heart still more.

I come back to myself, and have a thousand things which vex and irritate me. The pensions I told my sisters about, I shall evidently not get ; an intriguer would have had them ten times over before now. My father is worried and embarrassed by family affairs, and is still upset by them. If I take the regiment I shall vegetate there for six months, and the inevitable expense will be an embarrassment to me ; I shall have neither the type of occupation, nor the kind of activity which suit me. If I am to be exiled for six months, I should have liked to spend them in travel, in self-instruction, in seeing things I have not seen.

On the other hand, if I do not take it, M. de Saint-Germain may fail, and I may find myself unoccupied, with his successor perhaps an enemy ; I can say, certainly an enemy, if it is M. de Castries, for the trouble people made between him and me will not be forgotten. Ill-will is deep-seated in little minds ; it is the only emotion which they follow up. I have been brought into many other bothers too, with the Coignys, and with madame de Brionne. They say that I am the firebrand, the fire-ship, in M. de Saint-Germain's office. I have made my decision ; I shall no more press things, give no more advice. One must be ill-advised to counsel people to take a course stronger than they are themselves. Heavens ! How much life teaches us ! And then when one knows everything, one can no longer do anything, one is worn out, only the grave lies before one.

If I turn to my friends—not yet to you, for you are more to me than they are, and consequently you distress me more—I do not find any motive for consolation. The chevalier d'Aguesseau is as wretched as a stone ; unhappy in his sister of whom he is very fond, and who has just lost her only son, unhappy in his fortune, which the changes in the Body-Guard have much

diminished ; unhappy in his health which is always poor, and I shall not have the position for him which I refused so gladly, since I reckoned on having so many at my disposal for him. Some hanger-on of M. de Maurepas' will take it from me, that M. Dromol who is a poor creature, a knavish buffoon from Pont-Chartrain. Mme. de M . . . is beneath the knife. She is trembling for her fortune. They said yesterday that the arrangements about the postal service were made.

Formerly I should have brought all these worries to you, and you would have lightened them. Now you are yourself overwhelmed : you are suffering, you are dying ; your heart is closed against me, it does not hear me any more, it repulses me, it believes me to be the author, the sole author, of its woes.

Yesterday evening I arrive at your house, I get out there ; you are the first object I wish to see ; you fill my thoughts. You hardly look at me. Your first words are to ask me for news of the furlough. I had not forgotten it ! It was enough that you were interested in it. But you might have said one word about me.

You spoke of your health ; and you spoke of it with the accents of despair, as if to overwhelm me ; it seemed as if you wanted to say : " Yes, I am suffering, and you are my executioner ; I am dying, so that I may no more be forced to see you." . . . A torrent of sadness flooded my heart ; I went out, reached my house, and my condition did not alter. I am still sad.

I am interrupted.

I am going to dine with the duc de Liancourt ; it is two o'clock. I shall only have time to send you this letter. I shall be with you immediately after dinner.

Letter 229

TO THE COMTE DE GUIBERT

Friday, 6.0 *p.m.*, *March*, 1776.

Yes, I fully understand your generosity. You would like someone else to cause me to cling to life, or at least to snatch me away from the death to which you have condemned me.

How many thanks I owe you! The emotion of hatred could not have done more for my happiness and my repose. Would to God you had answered those indecent, unseasonable advances by hatred: that feeling would not have been less fatal to me than the one which led you to save my life.

But that is not in the least what I wanted to say to you: I wanted to thank you for having given me your news and asked me for mine: they are worse than ever, but still too good.

Letter 230

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Versailles, 6.0 *p.m.* (*Winter*, 1776).

Your prediction was right, my friend, I do not know what time I shall be able to leave here. The comte de Saint-Germain took medicine to-day, and when I saw him before dinner, he was greatly exhausted. He sent word that he hoped to be able to give me an hour this evening. I am waiting and getting bored.

Oh! if ever I am in my garden at sixty and over, and a King sends for me to be his minister, how well I shall answer his messenger, without leaving my spade! There is only one age for the activity and hard work

that such a position demands. But how annoying it is to waste the best years of one's life in working for the silly and ungrateful public! Yes, if one was wise, when young, one would refuse because one wanted to live and to love: when old, one would refuse too because one had to think about dying. Such are the reflections which M. de Saint-Germain's condition forces upon me, such is the irritation I feel.

And you, my friend, will expect me, will wait for me. How good you are? How much pain I often cause you! And do you think that I am insensible of it? Your ill-health haunts me; you looked worn out yesterday evening. It is all over; I see that your decision is taken; you would not wish for life any more, even if it was to bring you happiness. I pity you and love you in vain. If I can reach Paris before 11.0, you will see me; if not, till to-morrow. But perhaps I shall find a letter from you when I get home. Heavens, what pleasure that proof of generosity will give me! It will touch my heart. Its object will not be lost; the object of my thoughts is, for I can never persuade you that you are dear to me.

Good-bye, my friend.

Letter 231

to the comte de guibert

Friday. 10.0 *p.m.*, *April*, 1776.

Friendship works miracles. Here are the facts: M. de Saint-Chamans has asked for leave; if he does not get it, and goes to Monaco, he is done for. He has the fatal experience of the two past years; I do not say: ask for leave for him, because perhaps that is not what ought to be done. But speak of the bad state

he is in, the danger he is running, first by not using the remedies which he is ordered, and then in exposing himself to a climate which is deadly to him. In short, my friend, plead for his life, and you will remove from the little which remains for me to endure, one of the most profound griefs that I can now feel. Tell the Baron to join with you in speaking about the effects of the sea upon this unfortunate young man: he has witnessed it.

I expect news of you, since you have promised me them; for I think it is far pleasanter and more natural to talk to her to whom you have consecrated your life; one can have nothing left to say to one who is about to lose hers.

I can manage no more; that is the truth. Good-night.

Letter 232

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

Versailles.

The work has been completed this evening, my friend; it lasted until 10.0. I was not able to see the comte de Saint-Germain, but he sent me word that my business was done, that I had a regiment, only I must not yet talk about it. I imagine the comte de Crillon has one too; he was on the list. But what do I care about the regiment? It is not an unalloyed advantage. My mind is absorbed in thoughts which fill it and haunt it; I mean your condition, of which I have had no news for three days.

I am bound to stay here to-day, in order to see the comte de Saint-Germain, and watch over the choice of the second-in-command, and the lieutenant-colonel

and major who are to be given me. I shall come back however late it is ; do me the kindness to write to me or have a note sent to my rooms. I need it. I should go or send to you as I did that evening at midnight when I was distraught with anxiety.

Your condition has become much worse since, and my fears are at their height. Still Bordeu always says that if the tension of your mind was relaxed, if it ceased to suffer, you would get better. Oh ! my friend, is it possible that the man who loves you, whom you have loved, can have no more power over you ?

Letter 233

TO THE COMTE DE GUIBERT

(*Address written by d'Alembert*)

Wednesday, April, 1776.

I was in a state of nothingness yesterday ; this degree of exhaustion is like death, but unfortunately is not.

At 6.0 I thought that you were perhaps very near me, but perhaps you were a very long way away in thought, for people can be in the same room but still not at all together. My friend, do not come at ten in the evening ; come with your cloak, your socks, everything in fact which can prevent you from dying of cold.

Do you know what inures me a little to hardships for you ? The thought of the good Condorcet who goes on foot to Nogent every week, and he tells me that the journeys have strengthened him materially. As a result, he is going off this evening at 5.0 for his four leagues' walk. But still I think the Rue de Grammont is a long way off ; you ought to come in a carriage, and dismiss it.

M. de Saint-Chamans is no worse, but that is all, and his condition makes me very afraid for the future. You are a dear kind creature to be so good as to busy yourself with my affections. I had news of you yesterday through M. de Vaines. Good-bye, my friend. And besides I am not alone, which checks conversation. Till this evening, my friend; do not let yourself follow any other impulse.

Please, bring me this evening your *Travels in Prussia and Vienna*. Yes, I want it just as it is; if you say no, we shall quarrel.

Letter 234

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

(*Winter*, 1776.)

I feel it, I see it, I can expect nothing more of you, my friend. Despair and longing for death occupy your mind. You are detached from everything. Not a word of kindness and generosity towards me has escaped your lips for the last three weeks; and it is your will even more than your exhaustion which condemns me to this torture.

Yesterday again, you said that you wished me well, and added, "as much as you have done me harm". What a wish! The vengeance of hell could not form one more cruel! As for me, I love you more than ever; I embrace with transport the hope that Bordeu gave; I never stop thinking of you, I continue to write to you, I would kiss your door-step; I would die of grief, if you refused me admittance. My friend, yes, still my friend, the suffering you have caused me in the last three weeks would have fully expiated my faults,

if you could see into the depths of my heart. It is torn by grief and repentance.

I am leaving for Versailles. I shall go and see you, I shall stop at your house, unless I do not return until after eleven. I have some papers to give M. de Montbarrey, and some work to do on them with him.. I have not had yesterday's news of M. de Saint-Germain. I do not always take that as a good omen. At any other time it would be a great anxiety to me, but I can feel only you, and what concerns you.

Letter 235

TO THE COMTE DE GUIBERT

10.0 *p.m.*, *Monday*, *April*, 1776.

My friend, you saw me very weak, very unhappy; usually your presence checks my pain for a time, and restrains my tears; to-day, I was going under, and I do not know whether my mind or my body hurt me most. So deep-seated is this state of mind that I have just refused the consolations of friendship, and preferred to be alone, to say a word to you, to go to bed, rather than to enjoy the pleasant sadness of talking about my grief and sharing it.

I have just remembered that you told me that you liked to stay at home on *Tuesdays* and *Thursdays*. Your kindness has made you forget it, but I give you back your word. My friend, never did I less wish you to make sacrifices for me; alas! you can see whether I am in a condition to enjoy anything! I only cry out to you: do not tear open my wound. That is the extent of all my wishes. I think that, if you liked, your journeys to Versailles would be rather less frequent.

My friend, if I see you to-morrow, being me the rest of your journey, my letters and my blue pamphlet. If you have it ready to hand, give it to my little footman.

My friend, have you sent my note to the landlord of my house ? Heavens, I often regret the trouble I am giving you about those rooms ! Good-bye. I have really not strength enough to hold my pen ; all my faculties are taken up with suffering. I have reached that period in life when it is almost as painful to die as to live. I am too much afraid of pain. The illness of my mind has exhausted all my strength.

My friend, support me, but do not suffer, for that would become my most sensible pain.

I repeat, honestly and simply, do not deprive your family of to-morrow evening.

To-morrow is *Tuesday*.

Letter 236

TO THE SAME

May, 1776.

But that is just like you, beyond all measure ! To send twice at night ! Oh ! the best and the lightest of men ! Yes, calm yourself, I repeat it, you would hasten my ills ; yours hurt me, hurt me badly.

I have just taken a concoction of calf's crow ; it has not yet relieved me. I am in bed, and shall often think, with grief, that you are suffering. Do not come before mid-day, I am over-loaded with details about my health.

Letter 237

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

9.0 *p.m.*

For pity's sake, for love's sake, read, read.

I have been out since five, and have only just come in ; these four hours were the dullest and most boring that I have spent in my life : two of them with M. Sabourain, whom the comte de Saint-Germain had instructed me to see, and two with M. Joly de Fleury, working out, discussing and settling the edict about the *Ecole Militaire*. Never have I needed so much patience and clearmindedness as in disentangling all those legal difficulties and red-tape. I do not know how my faculties bore up. The thought of you distressed and disturbed them all the time. I was dying of longing to get back home, where I hoped to find news of you, of longing to go to see you.

At last I arrive. Your letter was given me ; you beg me to read it. Cruel creature ! I read and re-read it three times over, I bathed it with my tears. Your last will and testament ! . . . The words made me shudder. Alas ! They bear the very imprint of death ; they are the accents of agony. . . . Wretch that I am, what have I done to you ! You make me despair.

No, it is not pity, nor morality, which make me adjure you to live ; it is my own interest, the value I set on you, the need I have of you, that I may live myself. I love you, my friend, I love you. These words come from the bottom of my heart, my sobs would interrupt them if you were here.

I read your letter again ; it crushes me. Still I am not so guilty as you imagine. I have always loved you ; I loved you from the first moment I knew you. You

are the one thing in the world that most attracts and attaches me. Yes—(I must say it, for when I look into my heart I see that it is my most intimate thought)—if I had to choose between your death and that of anyone else I know, I should not hesitate. Die now, cruel that you are, and overwhelm me with the reproach that I am your murderer. I have not the strength to say more; I burst into tears. . . .

I must clear my brain. I have to finish an important piece of work which I am to take to the comte de Saint-Germain to-morrow. I have a secretary here waiting for me to dictate to him. What shall I dictate? That I love you, and that you are dying? . . . That is all that fills my thoughts.

Answer me, if your mind is still capable of any feeling. Answer me; I am suffering more than you. I am neither intoxicated nor soothed by opium; I am in full possession of all my senses, all my health, all my strength, and all these faculties are employed in anxiety and grief. Send me a line in answer.

I shall write to you to-morrow morning, and, whatever the time, I shall see you to-morrow when I come back from Versailles. Yes, whatever the time. So good-bye. Alas, your heart no longer hears me. It is frozen. I ask of you only a word, a single word.

Letter 238

to the comte de guibert

Saturday, 4 *o'clock*, *May*, 1776.

You are too good, too kind, my friend. You would like to revive and sustain a mind which is at last sinking beneath the weight of long-continued grief. I feel all the value of what you offer me, but I no longer deserve it.

There was a time when to be loved by you would have left me nothing to desire ; alas ! perhaps it would have smothered my regrets, or at least softened their bitterness. I should have wanted to live ; to-day I want nothing but to die. There can be no amends, no consolation for the loss I have suffered ; I ought not to have survived it. That, my friend, is the only trace of bitterness towards you which I can find in my heart. But, Heavens, how much the fatal impulse which attracted you to me at that moment has cost me in tears and pain, and in the end my life is sinking under it.

I should much like to know your destiny ; I should like you to be happy in your circumstances, for your character and your emotions will never make you very unhappy. I received your letter at 1.0, I had a burning fever. I cannot tell you how much time and labour it cost me to read it ; I did not want to put it off until to-day, and that almost made me delirious.

I hope to have news of you this evening.

Good-bye, my friend ; if ever I come back to life, I should like to spend it again in loving you, but there is no time left.

Letter 239

TO MLLE DE LESPINASSE

1776.

I AM to calm myself when you are dying ! . . . Your day was dreadful, the night will be terrible. Mine too will be one of painful sleeplessness. I have horrible pains in my head and my stomach ; I am going to go to bed. Alas ! Ghastly thoughts will besiege me there. For pity's sake, for love's sake, my poor friend, do not reject my despair.

See a doctor; take milk, since you have a feeling that it may relieve you. I am sending to your house again, I want to know how you are. It will be 11.30 or mid-night before your answer reaches me. It will find me awake, perhaps in tears, for when I am alone they are never dry.

I shall be with you to-morrow before mid-day. Oh, my friend, why can you not see to the bottom of my heart you would be touched by it. You *could* not resolve to die.

Good-bye.

Letter 240

TO THE COMTE DE GUIBERT[1]

Tuesday, 4.0 *o'clock*, *May*, 1776.

My friend, I love you; that is a sedative which stupefies my pain. It rests only with you to change it into a poison, of all poisons the most rapid and violent.

Alas! I feel so sick of life, that I am ready to beg your pity and generosity to grant me that relief. It would put an end to a painful agony which will soon weigh heavy on your mind.

Oh! my friend, let me owe repose to you; in virtue's name, be cruel once.

I am sinking. Good-bye.

[1] Unpublished. This, in all probability, was the last letter Mlle de Lespinasse wrote. [V-G.]

THE END

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Lettres . . . publiés par E. Asse. 8vo, Paris (1882). This edition is the most fully annotated, and is invaluable. It contains also the portraits of Mlle de Lespinasse by d'Alembert and Guibert, and the two chapters in continuation of Sterne, as well as her will, here first printed.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INDEX

OF PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE LETTERS

Note.—In the compilation of this index, much assistance has been derived from the notes of M. Asse in his edition of the *Letters*. Among other authorities consulted are the *Biographie Universelle*, the *Memoirs secrets* of Bachaumont, the *Correspondance Littéraire* of Grimm and his continuators, the *Letters* of Mme du Deffand, and H. Walpole, the *Histoire de la France* of M. Lavisse, and the *Dictionaries of Music* of Fétis and Grove. Persons mentioned in the Introduction only are not included, and it is considered unnecessary to give biographies of writers of world-wide fame.

Aguesseau, Charles Albert Xavier, chevalier d', was at this time lieutenant-colonel of the *Régiment de la Couronne*. He was the son of M. d'Aguesseau de la Lux, governor of Beaumont in the Argonne. He had intended to accompany Guibert on his travels in 1773, but was unable to do so. He was no relation of the famous Chancellor d'Aguesseau : 48, 50, 57, 70, 74, 92, 141, 157, 195, 203, 231, 300, 382, 397, 401, 427, 508.

Aix, archbishop of, *see* Boisgelin.

Albon, Julie Claude Hilaire d', mother of Mlle de Lespinasse, 3, 310.

Alembert, Jean Le Rond d', 1717(?)-1783, was an illegitimate son of Mme de Tencin. A prominent mathematician, his most famous work was his Preface to the Encyclopædia, with its rapid survey of the sciences (1751). Elected to the Academy in 1754, he became its Secretary in 1772. He came to live in the same house as Mlle de Lespinasse in 1765, and remained a faithful friend until her death : 3, 8, 11, 13ff, 19f, 29, 57, 66, 84, 85, 87, 97, 114, 129, 133, 135, 142, 148, 150, 152, 157, 160, 169, 180, 184, 186, 188, 190, 194, 208, 214, 222, 223, 248, 251, 254, 263, 279, 298, 302ff, 323, 346, 354, 361, 368-9, 489.

Amblimont, Marie de Chaumont Quitry, Mme d', married the comte d' Amblimont in 1775. He was a favourite of Mme de Pompadour : 243.

Angivillier, Charles C. de la Billarderie, comte d', a great friend of Mme de Marchais, whom he married after her husband's death. He was made Director of Buildings and Royal Manufactures in 1774, and encouraged a return to classical models. Inder his influence, the excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii began to bear fruit. He gave commissions for a series of monumental effigies of persons " illustrious for their virtues, talents and genius," popularised afterwards by small-scale reproductions made at Sèvres. " A curious attempt," says Michel of this (Histoire de l'art, 7, pt. 2, p. 550), " perhaps inspired partly by a desire to respond to the ideas of the philosophers, and to satisfy public opinion which was obviously turning against an absolute monarchy " : 32, 148, 170, 354, 363.

Anlezy, Jean Pierre de Damas, comte d', 1734- : 153, 307, 385, 387f, 439, 447, 457, 462, 483, 493, 506.

Anville, Marie Louise Nicole de la Rochefoucauld, duchesse d', was the eldest daughter of a grandson of the author of the *Maxims*. She was a great friend of the encyclopædists. Her husband was sent in command of a fleet to capture Louisburg in 1746. His ships were dispersed by a storm, and he died of grief and sickness near the present Halifax in Nova Scotia. H. Walpole tells how her son was brutally murdered in her presence at her country seat in September, 1772, and relates a story of her generosity to Condorcet, and the latter's ingratitude. (Letters, ed. Toynbee, 15, pp. 144, 174) : 30, 103, 199, 213, 266, 317, 353, 368, 427, 468.

Aranda, Pedro Pablo Abaraca y Bolea, conde d', 1718-1799, was one of the chief ministers of Charles III of Spain from 1766 to 1773. He was ambassador in Paris 1773-1792, and returned to Spain as minister : 57, 99.

Arcambal, Françoise Félicité du Crest de Chigy, marquise d', Her husband was *Colonel-propriétaire* of the Légion Corse in which Guibert was *Colonel-commandant*. She was a cousin of Mme de Genlis : 127, 300.

Argenson, Marc Pierre de Voyer, comte d', 1696-1764, was a son of the famous Lieutenant-General of the Police, and a brother of the marquis d'Argenson, author of the *Memoirs*. Grimm says he was one of the most amiable men of the time, and a clever courtier much in favour with the king : 61, 212.

Argental, Charles Augustin de Ferriol, comte d', 1700-1788, was a nephew of Cardinal de Tencin. He is said to be partly responsible for the *Comte de Comminges* of Mme de Tencin. He was a great admirer of Voltaire, who frequently consulted him : 216, 283, 312.

Arnaud, l'abbé François, 1721-1784, was a scholar and great lover of music. In 1754 he wrote a *Letter on music, to the Comte de Caylus*, intended as the prospectus to a great work which he never finished. He was joint-editor with Suard of the *Journal Etranger* and the *Gazette littéraire de l'Europe*, and contributed to the Memoirs of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres. He was a prominent partizan of Glück in the war between Glückists and Piccinnists : 216, 361.

Aubert, l'abbé Jean Louis, 1731-1814, was an editor of the *Journal de Trévoux*. He made a drama out of Gessner's *Death of Abel*, which Bachaumont praises as a model of simplicity and naturalness. He was made Professor of Eloquence at the College Royal in 1773. His *Fables*, first published in 1756, won wide popularity : 148.

Aumont, Louis Marie Augustin, duc d', 1709-1782, became Gentleman of the Bedchamber in 1774. He dismissed the whole operatic company and ordered that such spectacles should no longer be given at Versailles, on the ground that they cost too much and were not very amusing. He had a bitter quarrel with Marmontel on account of a parody which he considered insulting, but which Marmontel had not written. In the latter's words : " Since there was nothing in him to make him respected, he aimed at making himself at least feared " : 258, 291

B . . ., abbé de : 261, 300

Barentin, Charles Louis Francois de Paule de, 1738-1819, was advocate-general in the Parlement of Paris, and was made *garde des sceaux* in 1788 : 338

Beaujon, Nicolas, 1708-1786, was a famous financier. Generous towards the poor, he founded a hostel in Paris for the free education of twenty-four children of either sex born in the commune of Roule. He endowed the hostel lavishly, and it afterwards became a hospital: 177, 249.

Beaumont, Jean Louis Moreau, seigneur de, 1715-1785, became Intendant of Finance in 1756. He wrote a book on taxation, *Memoires concernant les impositions en Europe*, 4 v., Paris, 1768: 176, 182f.

Beauvais, Jean Baptiste Charles Marie de, 1731-1790, bishop of Senez, 1773-1783. A few days before the death of Louis XV, he preached at Versailles on the scandals of the court and the misery of the people. "Another forty days, and Nineveh will be destroyed," he cried. The words were later regarded as a prophecy: 193.

Beauvau, Charles Juste, prince de, 1720-1793, distinguished himself as the defence of Prague in 1742. The Peace of Paris in 1763 closed his military career. While governor of Languedoc, he showed justice and tolerance in releasing fourteen Protestant women who had been confined for years in a *Tour de Constance*, and defended his action with firmness and success. He was present at the *lit de justice* in 1771, and refused to support Maupeou. Louis XV recognised his honesty and prevented his exile. Under Louis XVI he was governor of Provence, and was made a Marshal of France in 1783. He accompanied the king in his journey from Versailles to Paris in July, 1789, and was chief minister for five months. A lover of literature, he was a member of the Accademia della Crusca (1748) and of the Académie Française (1771). In the Academy, his presence, says Marmontel, sufficed to ensure "decency, calm, unity, moderation, love of order and work". His reputation was that of a knight *sans peur et sans reproche*: 92, 281f.

Beauvau, Marie Charlotte de Rohan-Chabot, princesse de, 1729-1807, wife of the above. Mme Du Deffand comments on her husband's blind submissiveness to her. Her *Souvenirs* were published in 1782: 82, 92, 394.

Belveau: 94.

Bernis, François Joachim de Pierre, cardinal de, 1715-1792, belonged to a noble and ancient family. He early made a reputation in society as a writer of verse, and became a favourite of Mme de Pompadour. Fleury refused him advancement, but after the old minister's death he was sent as ambassador to Venice in 1752, and was recalled in 1755 to conduct the negotiations with Austria, which led to the Seven Years' War. His conduct was severely criticised, but Bernis defends it in his Memoirs. He was ordained in 1755, and became a Cardinal three years later. He resigned his position at court and was exiled until 1764, when he was made Archbishop of Albi. In 1769 he went as ambassador to Rome, and took a prominent part in the conclaves of 1769 and 1774. He remained in Rome, and gave hospitality to the aunts of Louis XVI when they fled there in 1791. He lost his whole fortune during the Revolution, but was given a pension by the King of Spain, and died at Rome in 1794. Voltaire called him *Babet-la-Bouquetière* and thought little of his verse, but praised his sanity of judgment. His works were published in Paris in 1797 : 179.

Bertin, Henri Léonard Jean Baptiste, 1719-1792, chief of police in Paris, 1757, and Comptroller-general, 1759-1763, was a patron of letters, science and agriculture. Popular at first, for he was no lover of extreme measures, he roused the anger of the Parlement, and the king removed him from office in 1763 : 318.

Berville, Eléonore Louise Le Gendre de, daughter of the marquis de Berville and Adelaide Le Gendre de Maigremont, who was a niece of the comte d'Argenson. She married the Marquis de Hallay in 1761. [Asse.] : 61

Boisgelin, Jean-de-Dieu-Raymond de Cucé de, 1732-1804, became Archbishop of Aix in 1770. He succeeded the abbé de Voisenon as a member of the Académie Française in 1776. He was a member of the States-General in 1789, and fled to England after the Constituent Assembly. He returned to France after the Concordat, and became Archbishop of Tours in 1802, shortly afterwards becoming a Cardinal. His funeral orations of the Dauphin in 1765, of Stanislas of

Poland in 1766, and of the Dauphine in 1769, were much admired. He also preached the coronation sermon for Louis XVI : 13, 186, 257, 306, 425.

Boismont, l'abbé Nicolas Thyrel de, 1715[?]-1786, went to Paris in 1749 and soon obtained a reputation as a preacher. He was elected to the Academy in 1765. He wrote a Panegyric of Saint Louis, and funeral orations on the Dauphin, the Queen of France, Louis XV and the empress Maria Theresa. He is said to have been an accomplished actor and a poet. His works were published, with an eulogy by Rulhières, in 1805 : 13, 186, 306.

Bon, l'abbé, was author of a *Lettre d'un homme du monde*, on the Bull Unigenitus : 13, 186.

Boeuil, baron de : 462 .

Bordeu, Théophile de, 1722-1776, a famous doctor, was one of the characters in Diderot's dialogue *The dream of d'Alembert*. He strongly opposed the teaching of Boerhaave, and wrote some important works on the glands. He did much to popularise the virtues of the mineral waters of Barrèges and Bagnères. His theories on the pulse brought him into violent conflict with Bouvart and Thierry, and in 1768 he declared himself in favour of vaccination. He published an important work on muscular tissue in 1767, and, in 1775, the first part of *Researches on chronic diseases* : 501, 513.

Boufflers, Amélie Constance Puchot des Alleurs, ?1749- , was daughter-in-law of Marie de Boufflers (*q.v.*). She was imprisoned during the Terror. M. Asse remarks that she is not to be confounded with Amélie de Boufflers, duchesse de Lauzun, 1751-1794 : 59, 60.

Boufflers, Marie Charlotte Hippolyte de Campet-Saujeon, comtesse de, married the marquis de Boufflers-Rouverel in 1746. She was on intimate terms with the Prince de Conti, grand-prior of the Knights of Malta in France, who lived in the Temple. So Mme du Deffand called her the *Idole du Temple*. In 1764 H. Walpole wrote of her : " She is past forty and does not appear ever to have been handsome, but is one of the most agreeable and sensible women I ever saw." But later he adds : " All is spoiled by an unrelaxed attention

to applause. You would think she was always sitting for her portrait to her biographer" : 32, 59, 71, 92, 95, 110, 115, 149, 153, 193, 199, 206, 217, 232, 238, 258, 270, 282, 306, 317, 391, 396, 403, 426, 497.

Bouvard de Fourqueux, Intendant of finance and a friend of Turgot, was made Comptroller-general in 1787 on the disgrace of Calonne, so that the latter's plans could be carried on. He had little knowledge of finance and had to be dismissed after a month, being succeeded by Loménie de Brienne. He served in the administration of Necker : 148.

Boutin, Charles Robert, Receiver-general of finances, guillotined in 1794, was one of the first to introduce the English garden to France. H. Walpole visited him at his house, Tivoli, and remarks of the garden, " The Lord knows what barbarism is going to be laid at our door " (Letters, ed. Toynbee, 8, 65) : 176, 429, 463, 464.

Bouzol, M. de : 392.

Breteuil, Louis Auguste Le Tonnelier, baron de, 1730-1807, was a nephew of Mme du Chatelet, Voltaire's friend. He served as ambassador at Cologne in 1756, and then at St. Petersburg, where he helped the French mission sent to observe the transit of Venus in 1761. He was afterwards sent to Holland, Naples and Vienna, and played a useful part in the Congress of Teschen in 1778. In 1783 he became a minister, and did much to ameliorate the condition of the prisons. He was disliked for his brusqueness, and had to retire in 1787. He left France in 1790, after being head of a ministry for a short time on the fall of Necker, and did not return until 1802. He died in comparative poverty in 1807 : 148, 391, 400.

Brienne, Etienne Charles de Loménie de, 1727-1794, became Archbishop of Toulouse in 1763. He was elected to the Academy in 1770, became a cardinal in 1788, and succeeded Calonne as finance minister in 1787. His measures roused violent opposition, and he had to resign. He left France, travelled in Italy, and returned, to die on his way to the guillotine : 133, 158, 186, 214, 324, 391, 400, 411, 425, 446, 461, 503, 506.

Brionne, Louise Julie Conſtance de Rohan-Guéménée, comteſſe de, 1734-1807, was a famous beauty : 110, 508.

Broglie, Charles François, comte de, 1719-1781, was ambaſſador to Poland in 1752, and ſtrove to form a party there to oppoſe the deſigns of Ruſſia. He was recalled and ſerved in the army in Germany, becoming lieutenant-general in 1760. He was afterwards head of Louis XV's ſecret correſpondence, and in this capacity gave orders oppoſed to thoſe of the miniſters in power. Exiled, he continued his ſecret advice, and on his return was among the leaders of the party which drove Choiſeul into exile. He was again exiled and died in 1781 : 92, 185, 250, 266, 297, 306, 401, 413, 416.

Caraccioli, Dominique, marquis de, 1715-1789, was Neapolitan ambaſſador in Paris from 1771-1784. He was a great friend of d'Alembert and Diderot, and was very popular in Paris. Mme du Deffand ſaid of him : " I like C. very well ; he is candid, frank and noble ; he is amuſing and enjoys being with me, . . . he ſays everything that comes into his head, and is all the rage here " (Correſpondence, ed. Lescure, II, 348). According to Marmontel, his features were rather dull and ſtupid, but when he talked he ſhowed a lively intelligence, and a gaiety and originality which charmed everyone. He wrote a book on the corn trade which created much intereſt : *Réflexions ſur la liberté du commerce des grains* (1785) : 15, 30, 82.

Carbon, Mlle, became the wife of the Comte de Crillon : 194, 220, 225, 239.

Cardon (or Cardonne), Denis Dominique, 1720-1783, was a learned orientaliſt who was profeſſor of Turkiſh and Perſian at the Collège Royal, and alſo a cenſor of books. He wrote a *Hiſtory of Africa and Spain under the Arabs*, in 1765 : 122.

Caſtries, Charles Eugène Gabriel de la Croix, maréchal de, 1727-1801, had a diſtinguiſhed military career, and was preſent at the battles of Dettingen and Minden. He was afterwards Governor-general of Flanders and Hainault, and Miniſter of Marine from 1780-1787. His work at the Admiralty was valuable. He made full uſe of ſpecialiſt advice, conſulting Suffren and other ſailors, and did much to

improve the condition of the seamen, organising medical services for them, among other reforms. He fled to Brunswick on the outbreak of the Revolution : 400, 508.

Chamfort, Sébastien-Roch-Nicolas, 1741-1794, with no fortune but his wit and personal charm, won a distinguished place in the society of Paris. He became the friend of d'Alembert, Voltaire, and Thomas. His first successes were the winning of a prize for poetry, offered by the Academy in 1764, and for eloquence, offered by the Academy of Marseilles in 1768. His plays, *La Jeune Indienne* and *Le Marchand de Smyrne*, won esteem but not success. Elected to the Academy in 1781, he seemed to have attained all that the Society of his day could give. But he was still dissatisfied, and in 1791 helped the revolutionary party with all his power. He wrote a discourse on the destruction of Academies, for Mirabeau, and Roland appointed him Librarian of the Bibliothèque Nationale. But his sarcastic tongue made him enemies : he was arrested, then released, and died in 1794. His *Maxims* and *Anecdotes*, bitter attacks upon the society which had showered so many gifts upon him, are the only part of his work which lives : 242f, 252.

Chastellux, Jean Francois de, 1734-1788, published his book on *La Félicité Publique* in 1772. He composed society comedies, in collaboration with Mlle de Gléon, many of which were acted at La Chevrette. He was among the first to realise the advantages of vaccination : 3, 14, 30, 74, 85, 86, 88, 91, 94, 122, 134, 153, 157f, 179, 222, 229, 236f, 238, 242, 249, 250f, 282, 347, 387, 418, 419.

Châtelet, Gabrielle Emilie le Tonnelier de Breteuil, marquise du, the famous friend of Voltaire, 1706-1749, was a good scholar in English, Latin and Italian, and had a wide knowledge of geometry, astronomy and physics. In 1738 she competed for a prize offered by the Académie des Sciences on the Nature of Fire, and two years afterwards published her *Institutions de Physique*, with an analysis of the philosophy of Leibniz. She translated Newton's *Principia*. Yet she could enjoy frivolity, and Voltaire said of her '*Son esprit est très philosophe, Mais son coeur aime les pompons.*' Mme du

Deffand wrote a malicious portrait of this "tall forbidding woman, with her high colour, sharp features and pointed nose": "She tries so hard to appear what she is not, that one cannot tell what she really is": 55.

Châtillon, Adrienne Emilie Félicité de la Baume la Blanc, married the Duc de Châtillon in 1756, and became a widow in 1762. She was daughter of Louis César de la Vallière: 32, 153, 185, 199, 225, 226, 244, 259, 260f, 290f, 298, 303, 317f, 385, 470.

Choiseul, Etienne François, duc de, 1719-1785, served in the army and became lieutenant-general in 1759. A favourite of Mme de Pompadour, he was made Minister of War in 1761, and did much to improve the army. He carried through the Family Compact, and won Corsica for France. His policy was not successful, and on the advent to power of Mme du Barry he was exiled in 1770. Allowed to return by Louis XVI in 1774, he was unable to oust Maurepas from the king's confidence and died in 1785, overwhelmed with debts, which his widow courageously paid off: 14, 214.

Choiseul, Louise Honorine Crozal du Châtel, duchesse de, has been called "one of the moral good fortunes of the 18th century": "she thinks like Montesquieu, writes as well as Mme du Deffand, leads the life of a saint". (Du Bled, La Société Française, 7, 191.) H. Walpole says of her: "My last new passion and I think the strongest, is the Duchesse de Choiseul. Her face is pretty, not very pretty; her person a little model. Cheerful, modest, full of attentions, with the happiest propriety of expression, and the greatest quickness of reason and judgement, you would take her for the queen of an allegory". (Letter of 11 Jan., 1766, ed. Toynbee, VI, p. 393.) Mme du Deffand, in an enthusiastic portrait, called her the "touchstone of other people's merits" (Correspondence, ed. Lescure, I, p. 396): 243.

Clairon, Claire Josèphe Legris de La Tude, (1723-1803, sprang into fame as an actress by her performance of the part of *Phèdre* in 1743, and consolidated her success in the parts of *Zénobie*, *Ariane* and *Electra*. She was for a time

an intimate friend of Marmontel, who gives an account of his relations with her in his Memoirs. H. Walpole regretted that he did not see her, so as to compare her with Dumesnil, who was her main rival for popularity, but he says that competent people said that Dumesnil was to be preferred: 392.

Clement XIV, Pope: 203.

Clive, Robert, 1725-1774, the defender of Arcot, and victor of Plassey, whose trial in 1773 had caused a sensation in Europe: 249.

Colasse, Pascal, 1639-1709, was one of the Masters of the Music under Louis XIV. Lully, hearing of his talent, had taken him as a pupil, and obtained the post for him in 1683. He wrote a number of motets and cantatas, and was not above utilising scraps which Lully had discarded. He ruined his health and his fortune by a vain search for the philosopher's stone: 496.

Condorcet, Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat de, 1743-1794, elected to the Académie des Science in 1769, became its perpetual secretary in 1773, and was elected to the Académie Francaise in 1782. His *Reflexions sur la commerce des Blés* was published in 1776, and in 1794 his *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain.* A learned mathematician, he was an eager supporter of political and social reform. He was a member of the Legislative Assembly and the Convention, was imprisoned during the Terror, and took poison in prison: 20, 183, 200, 213, 218, 246, 254, 263, 295, 298, 303, 321, 329, 342, 369, 383, 387, 468, 513.

Conflans, Louis de, marquis d'Armentières, 1711-1777, was made a Maréchal de France in 1759: 250.

Conti, Louis Francois de Bourbon, prince de, 1717-1776, served with distinction in the war of the Austrian Succession. After the war he fell into disfavour at Court because of his criticisms of the government, and was deprived of his offices. Under Louis XIV he opposed Turgot's reforms, and was among the most active in securing his dismissal: 149, 153.

Cordonnier, Hyacinthe, *see* Mathanasias.

Courcelles, Alexandrine Boutinon des Hayes de, who became Guibert's wife: 27, 127, 319.

Creutz, Gustave Philippe, comte de, 1726-1783, was Minister-plenipotentiary of Sweden in Paris, 1766-1783. Marmontel says that nature had endowed him warmth and sensibility, with delicacy of moral sense and taste, and with the love of the beautiful of every kind. He had the gift of expressing with fiery eloquence anything which struck his imagination. He spoke French like a Frenchman, and most of the languages of Europe, and had a wide knowledge of literature, chemistry and botany: 15, 221, 306.

Crillon, Francois Félix Dorothée, comte de, 1748-1820, was a deputy to the States-General in 1789. Voltaire thought highly of his gifts: 31, 57, 78, 92, 94, 99, 149, 153, 155, 169, 170, 180, 182, 191f, 193, 197, 200, 203, 210, 220, 228, 237, 238, 246, 249, 257, 270, 272, 297, 306ff, 312, 335, 349, 362, 368, 374, 399, 415, 457, 459, 479, 488.

Dauphine, Mme la, *i.e.* Marie Antoinette, who married the Dauphin Louis in 1770: 61.

De Vaines, Jean, d. 1803, the financier and *littérateur*, was made Director of the Domains of Limoges by Turgot, when the latter was Intendant of Auvergne, but was none the less employed by the abbé Terray in 1771. He became chief financial secretary under Turgot in 1774. Counsellor of State in 1800, he was made a member of the Institute in 1803 and died in March of that year. He was a friend of the philosophers, and entertained men of letters every Tuesday: 30, 108, 153, 157, 169, 176, 177, 183, 184, 192, 196, 203, 214, 219, 238, 263, 281, 303, 323, 328, 335, 355, 368, 385, 395, 399, 401, 409, 411, 414, 419, 424, 453, 497.

Diane de Poitiers, 1499-1566, the favourite of Henry II of France: 392.

Diderot, Denis, 1713-1784, a man of vast energy and astonishing fertility of mind, "wrote some fine pages, but never a complete book", as Marmontel says. "To have known D. only through his writings is not to have known him at all." His great work was the bringing to fruition of the

Encyclopedia. He could never secure election to the Academy: 40, 56, 240, 243, 246, 250.

Dorat, Claude Joseph, 1734-1780, composed tragedies, comedies, fables, odes, erotic poems—all with skill, but none with any sign of genius. A bitter enemy of the philosophers, he composed *Les Prôneurs, ou le Tartufe littéraire*, as a satire on the salon of Mlle de Lespinasse. It was published in 1777. The tragedy mentioned in Letter 13 was *Regulus*, and the comedy *Feinte par amour*. Bachaumont says that the latter, though common-place, was agreeable: 78, 190, 245.

Dromol, M.: 509.

Dubois, perhaps the *premier commis de la guerre*, who was friendly with Marmontel (Memoirs, bk. 5): 420.

Du Deffand, Marie de Vichy Champrond, Marquise, *see Introduction passim*, 82, 186, 353.

Dumouriez, implicated with Favier and Ségur (*q.v.*), was an able man with a wide knowledge of languages. A brave soldier, he won the Cross of St Louis at twenty-one years of age. Choiseul sent him to Poland as a French agent, but he failed there, and was afterwards sent to Holland in the same capacity. He was arrested there in September, 1773: 94, 335.

Du Muy, *see* Muy.

Duplessis, Joseph Sifrède, 1725-1802, artist, became a member of the Académie de peinture in 1774. His portrait of Glück was in the Imperial Gallery at Vienna: 216.

Durand, Ménil-, *see* Ménil-Durand.

Duras, Emmanuel Félicité, duc de, 1715-1789, was engaged in almost all the wars in the reign of Louis XV. A Maréchal de France, he was ambassador to Spain in 1753, was created a Peer of France in 1757, and became chief Gentleman of the King's Bedchamber and governor of Franche-Comté: 323, 334, 395, 417, 453.

Durtal, comtesse de, was widow of the comte de Durtal (1748-1774): 484.

Favier, a back-stairs politician at one time attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was arrested with Dumouriez

in September, 1773. Guibert was afraid he might be implicated, as is shown by a letter from him to Chaſtellux and Mlle de Lespinasse, dated from Vienna, 7 Sept., 1773. (Lettres inédites, éd. Henry, p. 213.) He thought that orders had been given for his own arreſt if he returned to France. He knew both the men, but had no knowledge of any conspiracy. A letter to Guibert follows (18 Oct., 1773), assuring him that there was no foundation for the rumour: 94.

Fénelon, François de Salignac de la Mothe, 1651-1715, was tutor to the Duke of Burgundy, 1689. He became Archbishop of Cambrai in 1695, and was deeply involved in the queſtion of Quietism. His *Traité de l'éducation des filles* appeared in 1687, and *Télémaque*, the work by which he is chiefly known, in 1689. The *Dialogues des morts* were published in 1700: 120, 148, 215.

Fitz-James, comte de, was Governor of Provence in 1763 when the provincial Parlements refuſed to ratify Bertin's new taxes. He is said to have been a lover of Mme Du Barry before she became the king's favourite. He was one of the peers who opposed Loménie de Brienne and proteſted againſt the edicts of 8 May, 1788. He was a grandson of the Duke of Berwick, illegitimate son of James II of England: 148.

Floquet, Etienne Joseph, 1750-1785, composer, produced his *Union de l'amour et des arts*, the ballet which made his reputation, in 1773, and, in 1774, the opera *Azolan*. He travelled in Italy, and composed other operas, but his attempt to rival Glück in his *Alceſte* failed, and this so discouraged him that his health broke down and he died in 1785: 245.

Fontenelle, Bernard Le Bovier, sieur de, 1657-1757, supported the moderns in the famous Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. He was moſt successful as a populariser of science, his *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1686) being widely read. He was secretary of the Académie des Sciences, and wrote its hiſtory, as well as Eulogies of many academicians. He was a great friend of the Marquise de

Lambert and of Mme Geoffrin. A precursor of the philosophers of the 18th century, he lived to see the triumph of the modern spirit: 7, 9, 200, 222, 239.

Forcalquier, Françoise René de Carbonnel de Camisy, comtesse de, 1725- , was one of the most beautiful women of her day. "La Bellissima", Mme du Deffand called her: 110.

Fourqueux, Bouvard de, *see* Bouvard de Fourqueux.

Frederick the Great, King of Prussia: 59, 61, 65, 66, 68, 75, 82, 105, 253.

Fuentès, Joaquin Atanasio, conde de, was father of the Marquis de Mora, and belonged to an old and distinguished Spanish family: 57, 188f, 197, 208.

Geoffrin, Marie Thérèse Rodet, dame, 1699-1777, *see introduction*: 6, 8, 14f, 29, 59, 85, 97, 103, 182, 232, 259, 269f, 283, 362.

Gessner, Salomon, 1730-1788, German lyric poet, published his *Daphnis* on 1754, the *Idylls* in 1756, and the *Death of Abel* in 1758. His works immediately became popular, and the *Death of Abel* was translated into French by Huber and Turgot in 1761. That same year Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloise* was published, and the stream of sentimental nature-worship became a flood: 17, 35, 56.

Gleichen, Charles Henri, baron de, 1735-1807, was Danish ambassador in Paris, 1763-1776: 246.

Gléon, Geneviève Savalette, marquise de, 1732-1795, was the author of a *Recueuil de comédies nouvelles*, 1787, edited by the chevalier de Chastellux, who often collaborated with her in the production of society comedies: 250, 394, 419, 423.

Glück, Christoph Willibald, ritter von, 1714-1787, wrote his opera *Iphigénie en Aulide*, which "marks a new era in the history of French opera", in 1772, and it was produced at the Opera in Paris in 1774, with great success. His *Armide*, written to prove that he could excel in tenderness as well as in tragedy, was produced in 1777, four months before Piccinni's *Roland*, and was the signal for the great struggle between Glückists and Piccinnists. (Grove, *Dict. of Music*, II, p. 400): 30, 31, 109, 216.

Grammont, Beatrix de Choiseul, duchesse de, 1730-1794, was a sister of the Duc de Choiseul : 153, 243, 394.

Grétry, André Ernest Modeste, 1741-1813, wrote some fifty operas. His *Fausse Magie*, in two acts, was produced in 1775. He excelled in the simple pastoral style, says the author of the article in Grove's *Dictionary of Music*. He died at the Hermitage near Montmorency which had been J. J. Rousseau's home. Méhul said of him that what he wrote was very clever, but it was not music : 322.

Grimm, Frédéric Melchior, 1723-1807, came to France as tutor to the Comte de Schomberg's children. He soon became a close friend of the philosophers, and did much in his *Correspondance littéraire* to spread their ideas. This correspondence, which Grimm carried on in succession to Raynal from 1753-1773, when Meister took it up, is a mine of information about the social history of the time. Grimm paid a visit to Russia in 1774. He had to leave Paris in 1790, and died in 1807 : 18, 243.

Guibert, Charles Bénoit de, father of the comte de Guibert : 44 note, 166.

Guibert, Jacques Antoine Hippolyte, comte de, *see Introduction*, 18, 21, 23ff.

Guines, Adrien Louis de Bonnières, duc de, 1725-1806, was ambassador in England, 1770-1775. His action against his secretary, who had accused him of speculating in English public funds, made a great stir. The duke won his case, but his reputation suffered : 354

Guliberg was arrested with Favier, Ségur and Dumouriez (*q.v.*) in September, 1773. The similarity of their names caused Guibert to fear that he might himself be implicated : 94.

Helvétius, Claude, 1715-1771, preached a morality of enlightened self-interest in his *De l'esprit* (1754), and *De l'homme* (1772). But, says Marmontel, nothing was less like the ingenuousness of his character and daily life than the premeditated and factitious singularity of his writings. After the death of Mlle de Lespinasse his house was one of the main resorts of literary society : 9, 16, 78, 231.

Héricourt, Mme de Trousset d', was a friend of d'Alembert: 306.

His, Mme, was a cousin of the Guiberts. She had a daughter, Mme d'Espagnac. She had no connection with the Sieur His who became bankrupt in 1781. (Bachaumont, 24 July, 1781): 493, 495.

Joly de Fleury, Jean François, became Procureur-général in 1756, at the age of twenty-eight, on the death of his father, a famous magistrate. On the disgrace of Necker in 1781 he became Comptroller-General, refusing the title, however, but was unable to bring order into the finances and was dismissed in 1783: 503, 517.

Kock, baron de, may be, as M. Asse conjectures, the General Coke mentioned by Mme du Deffand: "You saw that I wanted a certain General Coke to return: well, he has returned, and I cannot endure him". (Correspondance, éd. Saint-Aulaire, III, p. 10, Oct. 1773): 68, 246, 307.

La Boëtie, friend of Montaigne: 48, 65.

La Borde, Jean Joseph de, 1724-1794, Marquis de Méreville, famous for his patronage of the arts, and for his immense wealth. "He enjoyed his prosperity without pride and without boasting", says Marmontel, "and with perfect equanimity of mind, and leads a perfectly happy life with his wife and six children": 249, 259, 281, 293.

La Chevrette was the country house where Mme d'Epinay received the literary society of the day. The plays of Chastellux and Mlle de Gléon were performed there by amateur actors. In 1773 the house was probably occupied by Savalette de Magnanville, a treasury official: 447.

La Harpe, Jean François de, 1739-1803, attained a considerable reputation in literature, but did not possess outstanding genius. His Eulogy of Catinat was adjudged superior to that of Guibert, to the latter's mortification. He maintained a *Correspondance Littéraire* from 1774 to 1791, and this work is still of value. He also wrote a *Cours de littérature ancienne et moderne*: 3, 15, 20, 193, 212f, 229, 242, 284, 339, 359, 468.

Lançon, an artist, painted the portrait of Guibert which appears in his *Oeuvres militaires*, 1804 : 193f.

La Fontaine, Charles de, author of the *Fables*, : 193f, 200, 213.

La Rochefoucauld, Louis Alexandre, duc de, 1743-1792, was, according to Mme du Deffand, one of the most assiduous courtiers of Mlle de Lespinasse : 179, 483, 497, 499.

Lavalette, M. de, author of society plays : 365, 394.

La Vauguyon was ambassador to Holland in 1778. He was a son of the duc de La Vauguyon (1706-1772), who was tutor to the Duke of Burgundy, and after the latter's death, to the Dauphin's three remaining sons : 148.

Laverdy, Clément Charles François de, 1723-1793, became Comptroller General in 1763, and introduced freedom of trade in corn, but failed to restore order to the finances. He retired in 1764 and occupied himself with literature and the improvement of the conditions of those who lived on his estate. He was put to death in 1793 : 214.

La Vrillière, Louis Phelypeaux, duc de, comte de Saint-Florentin, 1705-1777, was head of the department which dealt with Protestants from 1725 to 1775, and, in 1749, was attached to the royal household. He is said to have issued vast numbers of *lettres de cachet*. He was created duc de la Vrillière in 1770, when he was for a few months foreign minister : 148, 338.

Lebrun, Charles François, secretary of the Chancellor Maupeou. Bachaumont, says he was a *ci-devant* Jesuit, and composed Maupeou's speeches : 155.

Leclerc, succeeded as chief financial secretary by De Vaines in 1774, was as ostentatious as De Vaines was simple in his tastes : 157.

Le Droit, Mme de, was a friend of Mlle de Lespinasse : 135, 472.

Lekain, Henri Louis, 1728-1778, was the greatest tragic actor of the century in France. After seeing him take the part of *Tancred* on its revival in 1771, Grimm said : " this actor must be reckoned among the rare phenomena which nature

sometimes amuses herself with creating, but is never sure of repeating". In his early days he was much helped by Voltaire, and played in amateur theatricals with him : 245.

Linguet, Simon Nicolas Henri, 1736-1794, a lawyer, *littérateur*, and pamphleteer, had brilliant gifts, but his sarcastic wit brought him many enemies. He was struck off the rolls by his colleagues, and became editor of the *Journal politique et littéraire* (1774-1776). The Journal was suppressed, and Linguet travelled in Holland and England, and soon after his return to France was imprisoned in the Bastille for two years (1779-1782). After visits to Brussels and Vienna, he returned to Paris in 1791, and was guillotined in 1794. His *Mémoires sur la Bastille* were first published in 1783. The pamphlet which Mlle de Lespinasse mentions in Letter 84 was the first number of his *Journal politique* : 246.

Louis XV, king of France : 105, 155.

Lully, Jean Baptiste, 1639-1687, came to France at an early age, and was employed as violinist by Louis XIV. He learned to compose, and soon wrote all the court ballets. With Quinault as librettist, he wrote the first legitimate French opera, *Les fêtes de l'amour et de Bacchus*, in 1672, and followed this by twenty more. The anecdote mentioned by Mlle de Lespinasse refers to the opera *Achille et Polyxène*, which Lully's confessor urged him to burn. The Prince de Conti expressed his surprise that the composer had yielded, but he replied that he knew what he was doing, for he had a copy of it, or, as another version has it, his pupil Colasse had a copy : 496.

Luxembourg, Madeleine Angélique de Neufville, duchesse de, married the second duc de Boufflers in 1721. Widowed in 1747, she married the duc de Luxembourg in 1750. H. Walpole says of her : " She has been very handsome, very abandoned and very mischievous. Her beauty is gone, her lovers are gone, and she thinks the devil is coming. This dejection has softened her into being rather agreeable, for she has wit and good breeding, but you would swear, by the restlessness of her person, and the horrors she cannot conceal, that she had signed the compact, and expected to be called

upon in a week for the performance" (Letter to Gray, Jan. 21, 1766, ed. Toynbee, 6, p. 409): 14, 82, 282, 306.

Magallon, le chevalier de, acted as guide to de Mora when he came to Paris. He was chargé d'affaires of Spain, and his reputation was not of the highest: 285.

Maintenon, Françoise d'Aubigné, marquise de, 1635-1719, the favourite of Louis XIV: 133, 392.

Malesherbes, Chrétien Guillaume de Lamoignon de, 1721-1794, became secretary of state for the Royal Household in 1775, but resigned on the fall of Turgot in 1776. He had formerly been head of the censors' department, and had favoured the philosophers. "Without him," says Grimm, "the Encyclopedia might never have appeared." In office, he tried to abolish *lettres de cachet*, and released many prisoners from the Bastille. He was a member of the Academies of Sciences and Inscriptions, and of the Académie Française. He was guillotined in 1794: 31, 233, 338, 347, 383, 400, 401, 421, 423.

Marchais, E. J. de La Borde, Mme de, 1735-1808, married the duc d'Angivillier on the death of La Borde. Her salon was one of the rendezvous of the philosophers. Marmontel says that in her were united all the charms of character, intelligence and conversation, and she was the best and most essential of friends: 32, 343, 363.

Marin, François Louis Claude, 1721-1809, wrote a *History of Saladin* in 1758, and was made a censor of books in 1762, a position made difficult by his friendship with Voltaire, Marmontel and Helvétius. He made many enemies while editor of the *Gazette de France*, 1771-1774, and was covered with ridicule by Beaumarchais, being deprived of all his offices in 1774. He lived in obscurity, but with a gradual return of reputation, until 1809: 148.

Marmontel, Jean François, 1723-1799, whose Memoirs are one of the most attractive pictures of the society of his day, wrote tragedies, comic operas, moral tales, and history. His *Bélisaire*, in 1767, was condemned by the Sorbonne, mainly because of a chapter on religious tolerance, but had a wide sale. His operas, *Roland* and *Dido*, with Piccinni's music

were very successful. He wrote articles on literature for the Encyclopedia, and succeeded d'Alembert as secretary of the Academy in 1783. He lived in retirement during the Revolution, and died, after a brief return to public life, in 1799 : 3, 8, 9, 14, 15, 19, 32, 221, 302.

Marnaval, M. de : 422.

Martinville, Mme de, was wife of a farmer-general. According to Bachaumont, her reputation was not unblemished : 94.

Marville, de, was a Counsellor of State, and Director-general of Savings. He died suddenly, after dining well, and eating a pretty good supper too in 1787, Bachaumont unkindly tells his readers : 200, 228.

Mathanasias, was the pseudonym under which Hyacinthe Cordonnier, 1684-1746, satirised Dacier and Voltaire in his *Chef d'oeuvre d'un inconnu*, of which the first edition was published in 1714, followed by numerous reprints with additions to the original text.

Maupeou, René Nicolas de, 1714-1792, became Chancellor in 1768. He worked to secure the overthrow of Choiseul, and, from 1771 to 1774 carried on the government with the aid of Terray and d'Aiguillon. He brought about the exile of the Parlement of Paris, and aimed at increasing the power of the crown. On the accession of Louis XVI, the opposition became stronger, and he was dismissed. He was detested by the more advanced thinkers of the time for his reactionary views : 148, 155, 214.

Maurepas, Jean Frédéric Phelippeaux, comte de, 1701-1781, was Minister of the Marine from 1723 to 1749, when he was disgraced on account of an epigram against Mme de Pompadour, and retired to Pontchartrain. He was recalled on the accession of Louis XVI, and remained his chief minister until 1781. He called in Turgot, but was influenced by that minister's opponents, and secured his fall, and treated Necker in the same way. He had, as Marmontel says, no vigour or courage, either for good or for evil, but was perhaps anxious for the public good, when he could secure it without any danger to himself : 156, 509.

Melet, Mme de, a friend of Mlle de Lespinasse : 429.

Ménil-Durand, François Jean de Graindorge d'Orgeville, baron de, 1729-1799, a soldier of some eminence, defended the old theories and tactics against the innovations urged by Guibert, in his book on the subject. Guibert wrote his *Defense of the modern system of war* in refutation of Ménil-Durand's arguments: 418, 421.

Meulan, Marguerite Jeanne de, was daughter of the comtesse de Saint-Chamans. Her husband became a receiver of finances in 1762. She was mother of Pauline de Meulan, who married the statesman Guizot: 276, 429.

Mileau, l'abbé, *see* Millot.

Millico, Guiseppe, 1739- , was considered a very great singer by Glück, who made him singing-master to his niece. He had a considerable success in London in 1772, and again in 1774, after which he went to Berlin: 158, 194.

Millot, Claude François Xavier, 1726-1785, historian, wrote works on the history of England and France, and an outline of universal history. After occupying a chair of history at Parma, he was elected to the Académie Française in 1778, and chosen as tutor to the duc d'Enghien in the same year. His style was thought very little of, and one academician said he would vote for him on condition he wrote better; after hearing Millot's *discours de réception*, says Grimm, he might well have retracted his vote. It was on this occasion that d'Alembert, in lauding the merits of Gresset, to whose seat Millot succeeded, said that Gresset had been elected without needing any woman's help; whereupon a murmur was heard: "O shades of Mlle de Lespinasse": 472.

Miromesnil, Armand Thomas Hue de, 1723-1796, was president of the Parlement of Rouen in 1755, and was exiled when Maupeou attacked the parlements. He became friendly with Maurepas, and was made *Garde des Sceaux* in 1774, but was disgraced in 1787: 148.

Montaigne, Michel de, 1533-1592, the essayist. His friendship with Etienne de la Boëtie was famous: 37, 65, 227, 269, 325.

Montbarrey, Alexandre Marie Léonor de Saint-Maurice, prince de, 1732-1796, succeeded Saint-Germain as War-minister in 1777, but was dismissed in 1780. He was a pleasure-seeking

courtier rather than a strong minister. He fled to Switzerland during the Revolution, and died at Constance in 1796 : 515.

Montespan, Françoise Athénais de Rochchouart de Mortemart, marquise de, 1641-1707, the favourite of Louis XIV, supplanted Mme de la Vallière in 1674, only to be in turn dispossessed by Mme de Maintenon : 133.

Monteynard, marquis de : 44 *note*.

Montsauge, Mme de, the former mistress of Guibert, and a constant object of Mlle de Lespinasse's jealousy : 26, 59, 60, 98, 99, 104, 110, 127, 129, 142f, 145, 161, 168, 170, 258f, 262, 277, 280, 287, 295, 301, 304, 315, 324, 328, 360, 422, 452, 469, 475, 493, 495, 509.

Morangiès, Jean François Charles de Molette, comte de, 1726- , was a *maréchal de camp* in the army. His lawsuit with the Véron family, which accused him of owing them 100,000 crowns, caused much excitement. Voltaire wrote in his defence, and Linguet also defended him. In 1773 the case was decided in his favour, and the grandson of the widow Véron who started the case, was banished for three years, and another litigant for nine years : 92.

Morellet, l'abbé André de, 1727-1809, the economist, wrote a refutation of Galiani's *Dialogues sur le commerce des blés* in 1770. In 1766 he translated Beccaria's *Treatise on Crime and Punishment*. He was a friend of Turgot and a champion of Free Trade. His house was on Sundays the rendezvous of musicians and authors. He had a great influence on Lord Shelburne, and so contributed much to the conclusion of a commercial treaty between France and England. According to Marmontel, he had a gift of ironical pleasantry equalled by none but Swift before him : 14, 115, 206, 391.

Muy, Mlle de Blanckart, Mme du, was wife of the comte du Muy : 185, 418.

Muy, Louis Nicolas Victor de Félix, comte du, 1711-1775, a very devout man, refused the Ministry of War, in 1762, but accepted it in 1775, a year before his death. He appears to have been tactless and not over-anxious to put down abuses in the army : 169, 185f, 396, 400, 418, 496.

Necker, Mme, wife of the famous minister : 6, 29, 353.

Newton, Sir Isaac, 1642-1727, the famous discoverer of the laws of gravity.

Nicole, Pierre, 1625-1695, was a famous Jansenist moralist. His treatise *Des moyens de conserver la paix*, was highly approved by Voltaire : 425.

Parangon, Mme, was a character in the *Paysan Perverti* of Rétif de la Bretonne : 473.

Penthièvre, Louis Jean Marie de Bourbon, duc de, 1725-1793, a grandson of Louis XIV, spent much of his wealth on beautifying the gardens of Sceaux for the benefit of the public who came to see them. He lost his son, the prince de Lamballe, at an early age, and took no part in politics. He died some weeks before the arrest of every member of the Bourbon family was decreed : 148.

Pezé, Alexandre Frédéric Jacques Masson, marquis de, 1741-1777, was chosen to instruct the Dauphin, afterwards Louis XVI, in tactics. Ambitious, he aimed at greater fame than he could win from the composition of light verse, such as *Zélis au bain*, and is said to have helped to overthrow Terray. But he made powerful enemies and was exiled to his country seat. He corresponded with Voltaire, and J. J. Rousseau read parts of his *Confessions* to him : 92.

Piccinni, Niccola, 1728-1800, the composer, made a great success with an opera at Naples in 1755, and added to it by his *opera buffa La Cuchina, ossia la buona figliuola*, produced in Rome in 1760. Losing his popularity after some years, he left Rome, and was persuaded to go to Paris, where his *Roland*, written in collaboration with Marmontel, was produced in 1778. His *Iphigénie*, 1781, was successful, but could not compare with Glück's opera on the same subject. He took no part in the violent struggle between his supporters and those of Glück, but left France in 1789. He returned in 1798, and lived on in destitution until 1800. " His art was of a kind which adapts itself to an age, Glück's the art to which the age has, in time, to adapt itself " (Grove, *Dict. of Music*, vol. IV, p. 175) : 30.

Pignatelli, prince de, second son of the conde de Fuentès, was brother of the marquis de Mora : 36.

Prévoſt, d'Exiles, l'abbé A. F., 1697-1763, author of *Manon Lescaut* and of *Cleveland* and many other works. He translated Richardson into French : 150.

Racine, Jean, poet and dramatiſt : 98, 113, 155, 212, 254.

Rancé, *or* Roncé, Mme de, was, according to M. Asse, a granddaughter of the comte de Grignan, Mme de Svigné's son-in-law : 243.

Rétif de la Bretonne, Nicolas Edmé, 1734-1806, is said to have published more than two hundred volumes. The *Paysan perverti* was published in 1776, and was his beſt work. His avowed objeĉt of reforming society was the excuse for works which are both scandalous and unreadable : 465.

Riccoboni, Mme, prolific writer of romances : 331, 343.

Richardson, Samuel, 1689-1761, the noveliſt. His *Pamela* appeared in 1740, *Clarissa* in 1747, and *Charles Grandison* in 1753. All these attained great popularity in France : 17, 150.

Rochambeau, Jean Baptiſte Donatien de Vimeur, comte de, 1725-1807, had a diſtinguished military career, and commanded the French troops when Cornwallis surrendered at York Town. He was made a Maréchal de France in 1791. He shared the views of Guibert and Saint-Germain on taĉtics, being a firm believer in the *ordre mince* : 92, 142.

Rochambeau, Mme de, wife of above : 92.

Roméo et Juliette, a play by Chaſtellux. This play has a happy ending, but as Grimm says " A man of taſte will always prefer Shakespeare's ending ". There were also plays with the same title by Ducis and de Boissy .

Roucher, Jean Antoine, 1745-1794, the poet. His poem *Les Mois*, was not published until 1779, although much of it had been read in various *salons*. He translated Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, and, while in prison during the Revolution, Thomson's *Seasons*. He was guillotined after seven month's captivity : 17, 270, 281f, 291, 303, 311.

Rousseau, Jean Jacques 1712-1778 : 16, 17, 20, 35, 56, 174, 326.

Sabourain, M. de : 517.

Saint-Blanckard, Mlle de : *see* Muy, Mme du.

Saint-Chamans, Joseph Louis, vicomte de, 1747-1785, was a colonel at twenty-four years of age. He married in 1773, but his health was always a source of anxiety to his friends, and particularly to Mlle de Lespinasse : 31, 361, 365, 374, 385, 411, 457, 463, 468, 483, 494, 503, 511f, 514.

Saint-Chamans, Louise Charlotte de Malézieu, marquise de, married Louis, marquis de Saint-Chamans du Peschier, in 1731. She was mother of the vicomte de Saint-Chamans, and of Mme de Meulan : 153, 267, 367, 474, 503.

Saint-Germain, Claude Louis, comte de, 1707-1778, after a successful military career, quarrelled with the duc de Broglie, and went to Denmark in 1762, and attempted to reform the Danish army. On the fall of the favourite Struensee in 1769, he left Denmark, and retired to a small estate, occupying himself in composing memoranda on the re-organisation of the French army. When Turgot came into power, these plans were read and approved, and Saint-Germain, a new Cincinnatus, was summoned to be Minister of War (Oct. 1775). His intentions were excellent, and in two years he issued no less than ninety-eight decrees, carrying out many useful reforms. He employed Guibert to help him in tactical questions. But he soon lost his popularity, for he was purely a soldier and made no attempt to conciliate opinion. He retired in May, 1777, and died four months later : 412, 415, 419, 420, 421, 423, 437, 441, 443-4, 446, 448ff, 456, 459, 461, 476, 483, 507, 510ff, 518.

Saint-Lambert, Charles François, marquis de, 1717-1803, published his *Seasons* in 1769. He also wrote an *Universal Catechism*, of which the first part was published in 1797 ; this work, like the *De l'esprit* of Helvétius, based morality on self-interest. He replied to Guibert's *Discours de réception* at the Academy in 1786, but offended him by his too sparing praise, and at the same time annoyed the duc de Broglie by asserting the correctness of Guibert's views on tactics. Marmontel says that Saint-Lambert was "scrupulously polite, if a little cold, and no-one talked more reasonably or with more perfect good taste" : 14, 17, 263, 375.

Saint-Marc, Jean Paul André des Rasins, marquis de, 1728-1818, wrote verse as a distraction when an accident compelled him to leave the army. His pastoral, the *Fête de Flora*, was produced in 1770, and he also wrote *Adèle de Ponthieu*. He composed the verses which were recited at the Comédie Française when the bust of Voltaire was crowned in 1778. He passed safely through the Revolution and died in 1818 : 415.

Saint-Prix, or Saint-Priest, was accused of taking 40% commission on the sale of corn. Turgot dismissed him and suppressed his office : 155.

Salm, *prince* Emmanuel de, visited Voltaire in 1771, and was a great friend of the comte de Crillon : 246.

Sartine, Antoine Raymond Jean Gualbert Gabriel de, 1729-1801, Lieutenant-general of police, 1759-1774, and Minister of Marine, 1774-1783. He won a high reputation while at the head of the police, and perfected a system of secret surveillance. At the admiralty he did good work in improving the condition of the fleet, but incurred the enmity of Necker for contracting a debt of twenty millions which the finance minister knew nothing of : 94, 148, 149.

Schomberg, Gotlob Louis, comte de, brought Grimm to France as tutor to his children. He was a friend of d'Alembert and visited Voltaire at Ferney in July, 1769. He survived the Revolution and died at Dresden : 105, 266, 400, 439, 462.

Shelburne, William Petty, Lord, 1st marquess of Lansdowne, 1737-1805, left Oxford without a degree in 1757, and joined the army, fighting at Minden. He was elected M.P. for High Wycombe in 1760, but took his seat in the House of Lords on his father's death in 1761. He refused office under Bute, but became President of the Board of Trade under Grenville. He soon joined the Opposition and spoke against general warrants, and in favour of Wilkes. In office under Pitt, he tried to retain the goodwill of the American colonies and had to resign in 1768. In 1771 he went to Paris, and met Morellet, who converted him to the doctrines of the economic school. He was in Opposition throughout North's

ministry, but accepted office under Rockingham in 1782. On the latter's death, Shelburne became Prime Minister, and carried through the treaty of peace with the American colonies (1783). He was displaced by the Fox-North coalition, and retired from public office. He was created Marquess of Lansdowne in 1784. A patron of arts, and a careful administrator of his estates, Shelburne was detested as a politician. His sincerity was doubted, and George III called him the "Jesuit of Berkeley Square". But his views were far-sighted, and Disraeli calls him "One of the suppressed characters of English history": 213, 232f, 238, 253.

Ségur, de, a captain of cavalry, was arrested with Favier, Dumouriez and others, on account, so rumour said, of a plot to stir up war in the north contrary to the King's plans. The duc de Broglie was said to be implicated: 94.

Senez, bishop of: *see* Beauvais, J. B. C. M. de.

Soret, Jean, *avocat*, was part author, with le Père Hayer, of *La religion vengée, ou réfutation des auteurs impies*, 21 v, 1757- . Bachaumont says that he was given a pension by the Assembly of the Clergy for his good work. Grimm says that, to judge from its beginning, this work of the children of darkness would develop into a most infamous libel: 213.

Stanislas, king of Poland: 15, 85.

Sterne, Laurence, 1713-1768. His main works were *Tristram Shandy* (1760-1767), and the *Sentimental Journey* (1768). Mlle de Lespinasse was particularly fond of the latter: 17, 213, 217.

Suard, Jean Baptiste Antoine, 1733-1817, left little work of value. He married the sister of Pankoucke, the publisher, and was editor of the *Gazette de France*, 1762-1771. He was elected to the Academy in 1772, but did not take his seat until 1774. He translated Robertson's *Charles V* and was joint editor with Arnaud, of the *Journal étranger* and the *Gazette littéraire de l'Europe*. Marmontel says that he was an amiable companion with a keen, ready and accurate brain: 3, 132, 161.

Ténon, Jacques René, 1724-1816, son of a surgeon, went early to Paris, and soon won a great reputation as a doctor. He became chief surgeon at La Salpétrière, and was elected to the Académie des Sciences in 1759. He wrote numerous works on medicine including one on the hospitals of Paris : 295, 491.

Terray, *l'abbé* Joseph Marie, 1715-1778, was generally detested, both for his personal character and for his wealth. He was Comptroller-general from 1770-1774, and was thought to use his position for his own advantage. He was, however, a good financier, and indifferent to opposition, and the task of bringing back stable financial conditions was an impossible one : 157, 167, 176, 183, 196, 211, 214, 247.

Thomas, Antoine Léonard, 1732-1785, won a high reputation for rhetoric. He was a *protégé* of Mme Geoffrin. His eulogy of Marshal Saxe won the Academy's prize in 1759, and in 1760 he won again with an Eulogy of d'Aguesseau. He wrote eulogies also of Duguay-Trouin, Sully, Descartes, and Marcus Aurelius, the last in 1770. Grimm says that he had no understanding of men, still less of women, and Marmontel describes him as being so absorbed in the pursuit of fame that he had no time for the minor graces of society : 14, 40, 194, 325.

Tingry, M. de, *not* Pierre François Tingry, the professor of chemistry and natural history, who settled in Geneva in 1770 : 445, 454.

Toulouse, archbishop of : *see* Brienne, E. C. de Loménie de.

Trudaine de Montigny, Jean Charles Philibert, became Intendant-general of finance on his father's death in 1769, and retained the post until 1777. Condorcet wrote an Eulogy of him. It was at his house at Montigny that the ministers assembled to choose a new war minister in October, 1775, on the death of du Muy : 396, 500.

Turgot, Anne Robert Jacques, 1727-1781, intended for the church, studied at Saint-Sulpice and the Sorbonne, but early became interested in the theories of the Philosophers and Economists. In 1761, he was made Intendant of Limoges

and carried out many reforms. He became Comptroller-general in 1774, on the fall of Terray and attempted to carry out large financial reforms and to introduce free trade in corn. He tried to abolish the *corvée*. Doctrinaire and difficult of access, he was incapable of winning over opponents, and the Queen, the Court, and the Parlement were all against him. In May, 1776, he had to resign. Voltaire said of his resignation : It is a disaster : 3, 13, 14, 17, 20, 31, 148, 149, 152, 155, 156, 169, 176, 182, 186, 194, 196, 199, 206, 211, 219, 223, 238, 247, 248, 255, 263, 265f, 269, 281f, 290, 298, 306, 335, 363, 398f, 408, 312, 415, 420, 425.

Turpin, François René, 1709-1799, was a professor at the University of Caen. His *Life* of Louis de Bourbon, prince de Condé, was published in 1767. La Harpe said of his *Plutarque Français* that it was neither Plutarch nor French : 148.

Vaux, Noel Jourdan, comte de, 1705-1788, entered the army in 1724 and served in it all his life, being made a Marshal in 1783. He was commander-in-chief in Corsica in 1769, and ten years later was appointed to command the army intended to attack England. The appointment was criticised on the ground that the general was old, infirm, gouty and very fat, but, adds Bachaumont, he certainly did not get the command through intrigue. He had a reputation for absolute honesty and justice : 400.

Véri, Joseph Alphonse de, 1724-1802, a school-fellow of Turgot, was a close friend of Maurepas when the latter was exiled to Bourges in 1740, and also acted as intermediary between the two men when Maurepas became Minister under Louis XVI. He was Vicar-General of the archbishopric of Bourges : 179.

Vergennes, Charles Gravier, comte de, 1717-1787, acquired diplomatic experience in Hanover, Constantinople (1754-68), and Sweden. Hard-working and conscientious, he had a thorough grasp of affairs. In 1774 he was made Minister of Foreign Affairs, and retained the post until his death. He reorganised his department and made it more efficient. His most important act was the war against England. He opposed Austria, without breaking with her, and wished to

prevent a new partition of Poland, and the destruction of Turkey. He negotiated treaties of commerce with England, Holland, U.S.A., Spain and Russia : 420.

Villeroi, the family of, were descendants of the duc de Villeroi, 1643-1730. The duke mentioned by Mlle de Lespinasse commanded a company of Guards, which was affected by the reforms of Saint-Germain. The duchess maintained a private theatre, and was much interested in Mesmer's theories of animal magnetism : 428.

Villenon, Mme de, a friend of Guibert : 97.

Voltaire, Francois Marie Arouet, *dit*, 1694-1778, was at the time of these letters living in retirement at Ferney, and was the patriarch of French literature : 7, 10, 21, 62, 65, 135, 152, 179, 193, 212, 213, 216, 253, 254, 306, 436, 437.

Voyer, Marie René, marquis de Voyer de Paulmy, showed conspicuous courage at the battle of Fontenoy, and had an active military career until the Peace of Vienna in 1762. He entertained lavishly at his chateau of Ormes, and was a patron of literature and art. He corresponded with Voltaire. In 1775, he was given active employment again, and died of a fever contracted in the marshes of Rochefort : 496.

Watelet, Claude Henri, 1718-1786, a wealthy financier, was interested in literature and art, and was a friend of Mme Geoffrin, Morellet and Suard. He wrote an *Art of Painting* in verse in 1760, and also a Dictionary of painting, engraving and sculpture. His most important work was his *Essay on gardens* in 1774, and at Moulin-Joly he created a new type of " English " garden very different from the formal, if magnificent, gardens of Le Notre and Mansard : 24.

Wimpffen, Pierre Chrétien, baron de, d. 1781, was Maréchal des Camps and Inspector-general of the troops. He was the right-hand-man of the comte de Saint-Germain, to whom he was related, during his war ministry. He was probably the author of a *Commentary* on the memoirs of Saint-Germain : 449, 495, 502.

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